MA'ĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

By

MAULĀNĀ MUFTI MUḤAMMAD SHAFI' رحمۃ اللہ علیہ

Translated By

Muḥammad Shamīm

Revised By

Maulānā Muḥammad Taqi 'Usmani

Volume 5

(Sūrah Yūsuf, Al-Ra'd, Ibrāhīm, Al-Ḥijr, Al-Naḥl, Banī Isrā'īl, Al-Kahf)

CONTENTS

SŪRAH YŪSUF

(Joseph)

S.No	Subject	Page

SŪRAH AL-RA'D

(The Thunder)

SŪRAH IBRĀHĪM

(Abraham)

SŪRAH AL-ḤIJR

SŪRAH AL-NAḤL

(The Honey Bee)

SŪRAH BANĪ ISRĀ'ĪL

(Al-'Isra')

S.No	Subject	Page

SŪRAH AL-KAHF

(The Cave)

❑❑❑

TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter	English Transliteration
ا	الف -- Alif	a
ب	باء -- bā	b
ت	تاء -- tā	t
ث	ثاء -- thā	th
ج	جيم -- jīm	j
ح	حاء -- ḥā	ḥ
خ	خاء -- khā	kh
د	دال -- dāl	d
ذ	ذال -- dhāl	dh
ر	راء -- rā	r
ز	زاى -- zā	z
س	سين -- sīn	s
ش	شين -- shīn	sh
ص	صاد -- ṣād	ṣ
ض	ضاد -- ḍād	ḍ
ط	طاء -- ṭā	ṭ
ظ	ظاء -- ẓā	ẓ
ع	عين -- ‘ayn	‘
غ	غين -- ghayn	gh
ف	فاء -- fā	f
ق	قاف -- qāf	q
ك	كاف -- kāf	k
ل	لام -- lām	l
م	ميم -- mīm	m
ن	نون -- nūn	n
ه	هاء -- hā	h
و	واؤ -- wāw	w
ء	همزه -- Hamzah	’
ى	ياء -- yā	y

<u>Short Vowels</u>

	: Fatḥah	a
	: Kasrah	i
	: Ḍammah	u

<u>Long Vowels</u>

ا	: Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
ى	: Maddah Yā	ī
و	: Maddah Wāw	ū

<u>Dipthongs</u>

اى	:Alif and Yā	ay (also ai in some cases)
او اؤ	: Alif and Wāw	aw (also au in some cases)

SŪRAH YŪSUF

[Joseph]

Sūrah Yūsuf was revealed in Makkah and it has 111 Verses and 22 Sections

Verses 1 - 6

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

الٓرٰ قف تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ ﴿١﴾ قف اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْءٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ
تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾ نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ اَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَآ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ
هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ ۖ وَاِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَمِنَ الْغٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾ اِذْ قَالَ يُوْسُفُ
لِاَبِيْهِ يٰٓاَبَتِ اِنِّىْ رَاَيْتُ اَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَّالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَاَيْتُهُمْ
لِىْ سٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٤﴾ قَالَ يٰبُنَىَّ لَا تَقْصُصْ رُءْيَاكَ عَلٰٓى اِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيْدُوْا
لَكَ كَيْدًا ؕ اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٥﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ يَجْتَبِيْكَ
رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحَادِيْثِ وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهٗ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلٰٓى اٰلِ
يَعْقُوْبَ كَمَآ اَتَمَّهَا عَلٰٓى اَبَوَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْحٰقَ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ
عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٦﴾ ع

Alif Lām Rā. These are verses of the enlightening Book. [1] **We have sent it down, an Arabic Qur'ān, so that you may understand.** [2]

We narrate to you the best narrative by revealing this Qur'ān to you, and surely before this, you were among the unaware. [3]

(It happened) when Yusuf said to his father, "My father, I have seen eleven stars and the Sun and the Moon; I have seen them all prostrating to me." [4]

He said, "My son, do not relate your dream to your brothers lest they should devise against you a plan. Surely, Satan is an open enemy for mankind. And in the like manner your Lord will choose you and teach you the interpretation of events, and will perfect His bounty upon you and upon the House of Ya'qūb, as He has perfected it, earlier, upon your father, Ibrāhīm and Isḥāq. Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing." [5-6]

Commentary

With the exception of four verses, Sūrah Yūsuf is wholly a Makkī Sūrah. In this Sūrah, the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been described with continuity and order. Then, the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام appears in this Sūrah alone. It has not been repeated anywhere else in the whole Qur'ān as such (with the exception of Sūrah Al-An'ām - 6:84 - and Sūrah Al-Mu'min or Ghāfir - 40:34 - where only the name of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been mentioned as a Messenger of Allah, in appropriate context). This is particular with the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, otherwise the stories and events concerning all blessed prophets have been introduced in the entire Qur'ān with great wisdom, part by part, and repeatedly too.

The truth of the matter is that world history and past experiences teach human beings what to do with their lives in the future. These have a natural effect of their own which acts better on minds and hearts as compared to the pull of formal education. This effect is deeper and fairly effortless. Therefore, in the Holy Qur'ān, which has been sent for all peoples of the world as their last testament, a marked portion of the entire history of the peoples of the world - a portion that serves as the master prescription for the betterment of the present and ultimate human condition - has been taken up electively and pragmatically. Furthermore, even this portion of world history has been introduced by the Holy Qur'ān, with its unique and unimitable style, in a manner that its reader simply does not get the impression that he or she was reading some book of history. In fact, whatever part of a certain story serves the need of driving home a lesson or tendering a good counsel on any given occasion, it is just that part which finds mention in that setting. And should

there be the need to allude to that particular part once again on some other occasion, it was repeated. Therefore, consideration was not given to sequential order in the narration of events in the story. At some places the earlier part of the story comes later, and the later part finds mention earlier. This special style of the Qur'ān carries a standing rule of guidance that reading or remembering world history and its past events is not an end by itself. Instead of that, the purpose of every human being should be to draw some lesson from every story and to cull and deduce some good advice from every information.

It is well-known that the human speech is classified into two forms: Descriptive (*khabar*) and imperative (*inshā'*). According to the knowledgable scholars, it is the later form (i.e. imperative) that is the essential objective. Description in itself is not an end. A wise man ought to learn an imperative from every description, and make use of it for correcting and reforming himself.

That the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ has been narrated in a sequence could be because historiography is a discipline. It has particular rules of guidance for its practitioners. For instance, the narration should not be so brief as to make its understanding impossible, nor should it be so long as would make reading and remembering it difficult - which becomes clear from the Qur'ānic treatment of this story.

According to some narrations, another reason for this could lie in what the Jews had said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. To test him, they had asked him: If you are a true prophet, tell us why did the family of Ya'qūb move from Syria to Egypt and what had actually happened to Yūsuf ﷺ? It was in answer to that that this whole story was revealed. It was a miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and certainly a great proof of his prophethood - for he was simply an Ummiyy, one who was not taught by anyone, who had never read a book and who had lived in Makkah practically his whole life, yet, he narrated all events mentioned in the Torah correctly. In fact, he told them of what was not mentioned in the Torah. There are many injunctions and instructions which emerge from these narrations which will appear later in this commentary.

In the first of the set of verses cited above, the words: الر 'Alif Lām Rā' are isolated letters (*al-Ḥurūf al-Muqaṭṭa'āt*) of the Holy Qur'ān. About

these, it is the universal verdict of the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn that they are a secret between Allah Ta'ālā, the speaker, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the addressee - which a third person cannot understand, nor is it appropriate for one to exert and insist on finding it out.

After that it was said: تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ (These are the verses of the enlightening Book). That is, these are verses of the Book which delineate the delimitations and restrictions of what is lawful and unlawful, including those of other things in all departments of human life, and thus gives people a simple, straight and moderate system of living, as promised in the Torah, and as already known to the Jews.

The statement made in verse 2 following immediately is: اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْءٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ (Surely, We have sent it down, an Arabic Qur'ān, so that you may understand).

It is indicative of the situation that those who had asked to be informed of what had happened to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were the Jews of Arabia. So, Allah Ta'ālā revealed this story in their language so that they may ponder over it and attest to the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and tune their lives in the light of the injunctions and instructions which emerge from this story.

This is the reason why the word: لَعَلَّ (*la'alla*) has been brought in here in the sense of 'so that' because the mindset of these addressees was already known - that they would, despite having the benefit of very clear verses before them, still doubt and delay their acceptance of truth.

In the third verse, it was said: نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ اَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَآ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ وَاِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَمِنَ الْغٰفِلِيْنَ (We narrate to you the best narrative by revealing this Qur'ān to you, and surely before this, you were among the unaware).

This is to chasten the Jews that they had tried to test the Messenger of Allah which proved to be in vain, for its effect turned out to be just the reverse of what they had intended. It only went on to prove the excellence and authenticity of the Messenger of Allah in a far more evident manner. From this it became clear that he was already an Ummiyy and had no knowledge of world history. Now that he came to know of this needs an explanation and there can be no explanation for this except

that he was Divinely educated and blessed with revelation as a prophet of Allah Ta'ālā.

Moving on the verse 4, the text takes up the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which opens with the following words: إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَٰٓأَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَٰجِدِينَ (It happened) [when Yūsuf said to his father, 'My father, I have seen eleven stars and the Sun and the Moon; I have seen them all prostrating to me.']

This was the dream seen by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام interpreting which Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said: 'The eleven stars meant the eleven brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام; and the Sun and the Moon meant his father and mother.'

According to al-Qurṭubī, though the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had passed away from this mortal world before this event, but in her place, his father was wedded to her sister. A maternal aunt already has love and concern for her sister's children as their natural mother would normally have. Now when she, after the death of her sister, comes to be the wife of the father, she would customarily be referred to as the mother.

The response given by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام appears in verses 5 and 6 in the following words: قَالَ يَٰبُنَيَّ لَا تَقْصُصْ رُءْيَاكَ عَلَىٰٓ إِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَٰنَ لِلْإِنسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ 'He said, 'My son, do not relate your dream to your brothers lest they [by finding out your greatness to come] should devise against you a plan. Surely, Satan is an open enemy for mankind ...' [for He seduces people to take such action for the sake of worldly wealth and power].'

Worth mentioning here are some religious issues which emerge from these verses:

The Nature of Dreams: Status and Kinds

First comes the nature of dreams and the status of events and information released by them. In Tafsīr Maẓharī, Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh رحمه الله تعالى has said: 'The reality of a dream is that, when the human self - as a result of sleep or unconsciousness - is freed from the management of the active body, it comes to see some shapes through the faculty of imagination. This is what a dream is. Then, it has three kinds, two out of which

are totally false, having no substance and base - while one, in terms of its being, is correct and true. But, even in this correct kind, some other contingents may occasionally intermingle and thereby make it defective and unreliable.

To explain this in detail, it can be said that the different shapes, images, situations and events one sees in a dream come in two modes. Sometimes, what one sees while awake returns to him transformed in a dream. And sometimes, it so happens that the Satan would make his input, introducing some forms, situations and events into a person's mind which would either be pleasing or terrifying. Both these kinds are false. They have no substance or reality, nor can they be interpreted in any actual sense. Out of these two, the first kind is Self-Suggestion (Ḥadīth An-Nafs) and the other, The Seductive Input of the Shayṭān (Taswīl Ash-Shayṭān).

The third kind, correct and true, is a kind of 'Ilhām (mode of inspiring) which is activated to warn a servant of Allah or to give him glad tidings. In other words, out of His unseen treasures, Allah Ta'ālā would put things in one's mind and heart.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: 'The dream of a believer is a dialogue in which he has the honour of talking to his Rabb.' This Ḥadīth has been reported by al-Ṭabarānī with a sound chain of authorities. (Maẓharī)

Explaining this, Ṣufis say that everything, before it comes to exist in this world, has a particular form in another universe called '*ālam-al-mithāl*',* a universe where, not only the substantial objects and physical realities, but also the attributes and noncorporal meanings, have particular shapes and forms. When the human self is freed from the concerns of body management while dreaming, it sometimes gets connected to the universe of '*ālam-al-mithāl*'. There one would see the representative forms. Then, these forms are shown from the universe of the Unseen. At times, it would so happen that temporary disturbances would cause false imaginings mix up with the real, therefore, it becomes difficult for the interpreters to interpret the dream soundly. However, when free of discordant elements, they are real. But, even among these, some dreams

*. 'The world of autonomous images' - Henry Corbin.

cannot be interpreted because the actuality of the event is not clear. In such a case too, should the interpretation be wrong, the event itself ends up being different. Therefore, only those dreams will become a true 'Ilhām (inspiration) from Allah, and a proven reality, which originate from the command of Allah with the condition that no discordant elements have intermingled with them and that it has been interpreted correctly too.

All dreams of the blessed prophets are like that. Therefore, their dreams too have the status of Waḥy (revelation). The dreams of common believing Muslims are not free of many a probability. Therefore, they are not a binding argument or proof for anyone. Sometimes, their dreams get mixed up with temperamental or self-oriented elements. On other occasions, the after effects of sins overtake a true dream in the form of dark and murky silhouttes making it unreliable. Then, there could be occasions when it becomes difficult to spell out a correct interpretation from given parameters.

The three kinds of dreams mentioned here have been reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He said that there are three kinds of dreams. (1) The Satanic in which the mind sees forms and shapes released by the Shayṭān. (2) That which one keeps seeing while awake. These present themselves before one in a dream. (3) The third kind, which is correct and true, is the forty-sixth part of the ingredients of prophethood (Nubuwwah), that is, it is an 'Ilhām (inspiration) from Allah Ta'ālā.

The Meaning of Dream being a part of Nubuwwah: An Explanation

In this kind, which is true and correct and which has been declared to be a part of prophethood in authentic prophetic Traditions, the narrations of Ḥadīth differ. In some, it has been identified as the fortieth part, while in some others, the forty-sixth. There are other narrations as well in which its being the forty-ninth, fiftieth and seventieth part has been reported. All these narrations have been compiled together in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī where, following the investigative judgement of Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, it has been established that there is no contradiction among them, in fact, each narration is correct in its place. As for the numerical variation in determining the parts, it depends upon the different attending conditions of those seeing the dream. Whoever is armed with the

quality of truth, trust, honesty and is perfect of faith shall be the one whose dream will be the fortieth part of Nubuwwah. And whoever ranks somewhat lesser in these qualities, his will be the forty-sixth or fiftieth part of it, and whoever is still lesser, his dream will be the seventieth part of Nubuwwah.

Worth pondering here is what does a true dream being a part of prophethood mean? Tafsīr Maẓharī has explained it by saying that the process of revelation to Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ as a Prophet of Allah continued for twenty three years. During the first biannual, this Divine revelation kept coming to him in the form of dreams. During the remaining forty five biannuals, it was communicated to him through the angel, *Jibra'īl al-Amīn*. Accounted for in this manner, true dreams turn out to be the fortieth part of the prophetic revelation. As for narrations where numbers vary on the lower or higher side, they either carry approximative statements, or stand dropped for lack of sound authority.

Imām al-Qurṭubī explains this by saying that there are occasions when one sees things in dreams which do not lie within his control. For example, one may see that he is flying high in the skies, or he may see things from the Unseen having access to which was not within one's control. If so, this cannot become possible through any means other than Divine support and inspiration itself - which, in reality, is an intrinsic attribute of prophethood. Therefore, it was declared to be a part of prophethood.

Refuting the Deception of the Qādiyāni Dajjāl [Imposter]

What has been stated above has led some people to run into a miserable error because they have taken the survival and continuity of this 'part' of prophethood in the world as the very survival and continuity of prophethood itself! This is against definite, categorical and absolute statements of the Holy Qur'ān and against countless sound and authentic Aḥādīth, and squarely against the collective belief of the entire Muslim Ummah in the finality of prophethood (the 'Aqīdah of Khatm Nubūwwat). In this exercise in deception, they have failed to realize that the presence of a part of something does not mean the presence of that thing in full. If there is a single nail or strand of hair belonging to a person present anywhere, no sane human being can say that the person is present here. Think of the many parts of a machine. If someone has one part, or

a screw of that machine present with him and he goes about declaring that he has such and such machine with him, the whole world would dismiss him as a liar or fool.

True dreams, as expressly explained in Ḥadīth, are, without any doubt, a part of Nubuwwah - but not Nubuwwah itself. What we know as Nubuwwah or prophethood has already ended with the Last of Prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ.

It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

لَمْ يَبْقَ مِنَ النُّبُوَّةِ إِلاَّ الْمُبَشِّرَاتِ

That is, (in future) no part of the Nubuwwah will remain except Al-Mubashshirāt.

When the noble Ṣaḥābah asked for the meaning of Al-Mubashshirāt, he said: 'True dreams.' This proves that there is no Nubūwwah or prophethood of any kind or form for anyone anymore. What remains of it is only a small part which is called Al-Mubashshirāt or true dreams.

The Dream of a Sinning Disbeliever may also be True at times

It stands proved from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, and from experience, that sinners, even disbelievers, could see dreams which are true. In the Sūrah Yūsuf itself, mentioned there are the dreams of two prison mates of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which were true, and similarly, the dream of the king of Egypt which was true - though, the three of them were not Muslims. This was in the Qur'ān. Mentioned in the Ḥadīth is the dream of Kisrā (Cyrus) who had dreamt about the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ; that dream turned out to be true, though Kisrā was not a Muslim. The paternal aunt of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, 'Ātikah, had seen a true dream about the Holy Prophet ﷺ while she was still a disbeliever. In addition to that, the dream of the disbelieving King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, which was interpreted by Sayyidnā Dāniyāl (Daniel) عليه السلام was a true dream.

This tells us that the simple instance of someone seeing a true dream and the event taking place as seen cannot become a proof of the dreamer being pious and righteous, even Muslim. However, it is correct to say that this is how the customary practice of Allah operates - that the dreams seen by true and good people are generally true. The dreams

seen by sinners are generally from the category of self-suggestions and Satanic inputs - but, occasionally, the opposite could also happen.

In short, true dreams, as made clear in Ḥadīth, have no place in the lives of Muslims at large except that they can be either glad tidings, or warning, for them. They are no binding argument in any matter, neither for their own selves, nor for others. Some people, unaware of this truth, fall a victim to all sorts of scruples after having seen such dreams. Some of them would start taking these as a sign of having become a saint or something like that. Others would tend to give what they get out of these dreams the status of the injunctions of the Sharī'ah. All these approaches are baseless. Specially so, when we already know that there is every likelihood that both kinds of imaginings, self-suggested or Satan-induced, can get profusely intermingled with true dreams.

Relating Dreams to Everyone is not Correct : RULINGS

1. In verse 5: ... قَالَ يٰبُنَيَّ (He said, 'O my son ...'), Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has prohibited Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from relating his dream to his brothers. This tells us that a dream should not be related before a person who is not a well-wisher, nor before a person who is no expert in the interpretation of dreams.

According to Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A true dream is one of the forty parts of Nubūwwah. And a dream stays in suspension until related to someone. When related, and interpreted by the listener, it actualizes as interpreted. Therefore, one should not relate the dream to anyone, except to a person who is knowing and wise, or is, at least, a friend and a well-wisher.

As also referred to earlier, it appears in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A dream is of three kinds: (1) Glad tidings from Allah; (2) self-suggestions; (3) Satanic inputs. Therefore, should a person see a certain dream about which he feels good, then, he can relate it to others, if he wishes to do so. And, should he see something bad in it, let him not tell anyone about it. Instead, he should rise and offer Ṣalāh. The Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim also says: If one sees a bad dream, he should blow his breath three times towards his left side and seek the protection of Allah against its evil and tell no one about it. If this is done,

the dream will not cause any harm. The reason is that some dreams are composed of Satanic seductions. They will stand removed with this action. And, if the dream is true, the evil part of it - it can be hoped - will also be eliminated through this action.

2. As for the sense of the interpretation of a dream remaining hinged to it, Tafsīr Maẓharī explains it by saying that some matters of destiny are not absolutely pre-decided, instead, they remain in a state of suspension, that is, if something was done, the impending misfortune will go away - and if it was not done, it will come. This is known as contingent or conditional destiny. In a situation like that giving a bad interpretation makes things turn bad while a good interpretation makes it come out good. Therefore, in the Ḥadīth from Tirmidhī mentioned above, relating a dream to a person who is not wise, or a well-wisher, has been prohibited. And there could also be another reason for this. When someone hears a bad interpretation of the dream seen, one finds himself overwhelmed by the thought that he is going to be hit by some misfortune. And it appears in Ḥadīth that Allah Taʿālā said: أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي that is, 'I am with the opinion of My servant about Me.' In other words, 'whatever a servant of Mine believes Me to be, just that I become for him.' So, when one ends up believing that misfortune is going to come from Allah Taʿālā, then, true to the customary practice of Allah, the coming of that misfortune becomes due against him.

3. Regarding the instruction given in the verse that something suggesting pain and misfortune seen in a dream should not be related to anyone, Ḥadīth narrations seem to indicate that this is not a legal prohibition. It is only an advice based on affection and sympathy. This should not be taken as something made unlawful by the Sharīʿah. Therefore, if related to someone, this will be no sin - because it appears in authentic Aḥādīth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ - at the time of the Battle of Uḥud - said: I have seen in a dream that my sword, Zulfaqār, has broken and I saw some cows being slaughtered, the interpretation of which was the Shahadah of Sayyidnā Hamzah رضي الله عنه and many other Muslim *mujāhidīn*, a grave misfortune indeed. But, he had related this dream before the Ṣaḥābah. (Qurṭubī)

4. This verse also tells us that it is permissible to disclose the evil trait or intention of a person about to cause harm to a Muslim. Being an

effort to offset an evil design, this action is not included under Ghībah or backbiting. For example, if a person finds out that A is planning to commit theft in the house of B, or intends to kill him, then, he should forewarn B. This does not fall under the purview of Ghībah which is Ḥarām. This is what was done by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام when he had disclosed to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that there was a danger to his life at the hands of his brothers.

5. If a person is blessed by Allah, and he apprehends that his addressee will be jealous against him, he should not mention the blessings of wealth, status, and things like that before that person. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

> To make your objectives succeed, seek help from keeping them secret - because, every holder of blessing is envied in this world.

6. From this verse and from the later in which the plan and execution of killing or throwing Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in a well has been mentioned, it becomes evident that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were no prophets or messengers of Allah, otherwise, they would have not stooped to the act of conspiring to kill him, then to put him out of their way by lowering him down in a desolate well, and ultimately, to disobey their father - because, the blessed prophets عليهم السلام have to be free of all sins, and protected from them. Their reference as 'prophets' in the book of al-Ṭabari is not correct. (Qurṭubī)

Expertise in the Interpretation of Dreams is Bestowed by Allah on whom He wills

In the sixth verse, Allah Ta'ālā has promised some blessings for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: (1) كَذٰلِكَ يَجْتَبِيْكَ رَبُّكَ (And in the like manner your Lord will choose you ...) that is, He will choose him for His blessings and favours, something which manifested itself when wealth, recognition and power came into his hands in the country of Egypt. (2) وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَأْوِيْلِ الْأَحَادِيْثِ (and teach you the interpretation of events ...). The word: الاحاديث : 'al-aḥādīth' here means the dreams of people. It means that Allah Ta'ālā will teach him how to interpret dreams. This also tells us that interpreting dreams is a standing area of expertise which is bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā on a chosen few - everyone is not fit to have it.

Ruling:

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that 'Abdullāh ibn Shaddād ibn al-Had said that the interpretation of this dream of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام actualized after forty years. This tells us that an instant actualization of an interpretation is not necessary either.

(3) As for the third promise: وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهٗ عَلَيْكَ (and will perfect His bounty upon you), it refers to the bestowal of Nubūwwah (prophethood) upon him. And this is what has been alluded to in the later sentences: كَمَآ اَتَمَّهَا عَلٰٓى اَبَوَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْحٰقَ (as He has perfected it, earlier, upon your father, Ibrāhīm and Isḥāq). That which has been said here also indicates that the skill of interpreting dreams as given to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was also taught to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Isḥāq, peace be on them both.

At the end of the verse, it was said: اِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ (Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing). So He is. For Him, teaching an art to someone is not difficult, nor does He, as His wisdom would have it, teach this art to just anyone. Instead of that, He elects someone, in His wisdom, and lets him have this expertise.

Verses 7 - 20

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِيْ يُوْسُفَ وَاِخْوَتِهٖٓ اٰيٰتٌ لِّلسَّآئِلِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾ اِذْ قَالُوْا لَيُوْسُفُ
وَاَخُوْهُ اَحَبُّ اِلٰٓى اَبِيْنَا مِنَّا وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ ۭ اِنَّ اَبَانَا لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنِ
﴿٨﴾ ۨ اقْتُلُوْا يُوْسُفَ اَوِ اطْرَحُوْهُ اَرْضًا يَّخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهُ اَبِيْكُمْ وَتَكُوْنُوْا
مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ قَوْمًا صٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٩﴾ قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوْا يُوْسُفَ وَاَلْقُوْهُ
فِيْ غَيٰبَتِ الْجُبِّ يَلْتَقِطْهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ قَالُوْا
يٰٓاَبَانَا مَا لَكَ لَا تَاْمَنَّا عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ وَاِنَّا لَهٗ لَنٰصِحُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ اَرْسِلْهُ مَعَنَا
غَدًا يَّرْتَعْ وَيَلْعَبْ وَاِنَّا لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ قَالَ اِنِّيْ لَيَحْزُنُنِيْٓ اَنْ
تَذْهَبُوْا بِهٖ وَاَخَافُ اَنْ يَّاْكُلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَاَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ غٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالُوْا
لَئِنْ اَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوْا بِهٖ

وَاَجۡمَعُوۡۤا اَنۡ يَّجۡعَلُوۡهُ فِىۡ غَيٰبَتِ الۡجُبِّ‌ ۚ وَاَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡهِ لَـتُنَـبِّئَـنَّهُمۡ
بِاَمۡرِهِمۡ هٰذَا وَهُمۡ لَا يَشۡعُرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾ وَجَآءُوۡۤ اَبَاهُمۡ عِشَآءً يَّبۡكُوۡنَ ﴿۱۶﴾
قَالُوۡا يٰۤاَبَانَاۤ اِنَّا ذَهَبۡنَا نَسۡتَبِقُ وَتَرَكۡنَا يُوۡسُفَ عِنۡدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَاَكَلَهُ الذِّئۡبُ‌
ۚ وَمَاۤ اَنۡتَ بِمُؤۡمِنٍ لَّنَا وَلَوۡ كُنَّا صٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿۱۷﴾ وَجَآءُوۡ عَلٰى قَمِيۡصِهٖ
بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ‌ ؕ قَالَ بَلۡ سَوَّلَتۡ لَـكُمۡ اَنۡفُسُكُمۡ اَمۡرًا‌ ؕ فَصَبۡرٌ جَمِيۡلٌ‌ ؕ
وَاللّٰهُ الۡمُسۡتَعَانُ عَلٰى مَا تَصِفُوۡنَ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَجَآءَتۡ سَيَّارَةٌ فَاَرۡسَلُوۡا
وَارِدَهُمۡ فَاَدۡلٰى دَلۡوَهٗ‌ ؕ قَالَ يٰبُشۡرٰى هٰذَا غُلٰمٌ‌ ؕ وَاَسَرُّوۡهُ بِضَاعَةً‌ ؕ
وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِمَا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۹﴾ وَشَرَوۡهُ بِثَمَنٍۢ بَخۡسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعۡدُوۡدَةٍ‌
ۚ وَكَانُوۡا فِيۡهِ مِنَ الزّٰهِدِيۡنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ ع

Surely, in (the story of) Yūsuf and his brothers, there are signs for those who ask [7] **when they said, "Yūsuf and his brother are dearer to our father than we are while we are a powerful group (for him). Surely, our father is in clear error.** [8] **Kill Yūsuf or throw him in some land , so that your father's face may be your's alone, and after that you may become a righteous people."** [9]

One of them said, "Do not kill Yūsuf, rather, cast him into the bottom of a pit, so that some wayfarer picks him up, if you are going to do something at all." [10]

They said, "Our father, why is it that you do not trust us with Yūsuf while indeed, we are his well-wishers. [11] **Send him with us tomorrow, that he may eat and play, and of course, we are his guards."** [12]

He said, "It makes me sad that you should take him away and I fear lest a wolf should devour him while you are heedless of him." [13]

They said, 'If the wolf eats him while we are a strong group, we are then losers indeed." [14]

So, when they went with him and were determined to put him in the bottom of a pit (which they did). And We revealed to him, "You will (one day) tell them of this

deed of theirs while they will not recognize (you)." [15]

And they came weeping to their father at nightfall. [16] **They said, "Father, we went running races and left Yūsuf with our belongings and the wolf ate him up. And you will never believe us, even though we are telling the truth."** [17]

And they came with fake blood on his shirt. He said, "Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best. And it is Allah whose help is sought against what you describe." [18]

And there came some wayfarers and sent one of them to go for water. So, he let down his bucket. He said, "What a good news! Here is a boy." And they kept him hidden as merchandise, while Allah was aware of what they were doing. [19] **And they sold him for a paltry price, for a few silver-coins, and they were disinterested in him.** [20]

Commentary

In the first of the fourteen verses cited above (7), a notice of warning has been served to the effect that the story of Yūsuf, peace be on him, should not be taken as a common story - because, in it, there are great signs of the perfect power of Allah Taʿālā, and His instructions, both for those who have asked and for those who would seek guidance through it.

The statement made here could be explained by saying that the signs referred to here are for the Jews who had put the Holy Prophet ﷺ to test by asking him to relate this story to them. When, according to a narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was in Makkah al-Muʿaẓẓamah, the news about him reached Madīnah. The Jews living there sent a group of their men to Makkah to make investigations and test his claim to prophethood. Therefore, the question they asked of him was put in a somewhat vague manner, that is, 'if you are a true prophet of Allah, tell us about the prophet one of whose sons was taken from Syria to Egypt, an event which had caused his father to become blind due to constant weeping during his absence.

The Jews had chosen to ask about this event because it was not widely known, nor did anyone in Makkah was aware of it. That was a time when there was no member of the people of Book living in Makkah, one

from whom some part of this story as appearing in the Torah and Injil could be ascertained. So, it was following this very question that the entire Sūrah Yūsuf was revealed, a Sūrah which relates the whole story of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb and Yūsuf علیهما السلام - and does it in such details as do not appear even in Torah and Injīl. Therefore, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ described it, it was an open miracle shown at his blessed hands.

Alternately, this verse could also mean that this event in itself - aside from the question asked by the Jews - was full of great signs of the perfect power of Allah Taʿālā and that, in it, there were major elements of Divine guidance, and instructions and injunctions. One could imagine the destiny of a child who was thrown in a pit when the power of Allah took over, carried him from one stage to the other guarding him all along, from his childhood to his youth. Then, Allah Taʿālā has blessed him with a divine colour as He would do with His special servants for he stood steadfast as His servant against trials which would make obedience difficult. It is all the more difficult when one is young and challenged by opportunities. But, here is he, armed with the fear of Allah. He holds his ground, controls his self from desiring the undesirable and walks out clean from the stranglehold of temptation. Then, the story tells us how Allah rewards a person who takes to righteousness and fear of Allah as his conscious and determined way of life, how He makes him rise higher than his adversaries in power and recognition, and how they stand subdued before him finally. These are lessons and truths, all pointing to the great signs of the Divine power which can be realized by anyone who would care to look and find out. (Qurṭubī & Maẓharī)

This verse mentions the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. The reference is to the twelve sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, including Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Every son from among them had their children. Their families prospered. Since the title by which Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was known was Isrā'īl, therefore, all these twelve families were identified as Banī Isrā'īl (the children of Isrā'īl).

Out of these twelve sons, the eldest ten were from the first blessed wife of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, Sayyidah Layya, daughter of Layyān. After her death, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام married her sister, Rāḥīl * (Rachel). She became the mother of his two sons, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and

*. See editorial note on page 156.

Benyāmin (Benjamin). Therefore, Benyāmin was the only real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. The rest of the ten were his half-brothers from the father's side. Rāḥil, the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, had died during his childhood at the time of the birth of Benyāmin. (Qurṭubī)

From the second verse (8), begins the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which tells that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام saw that their father, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام loved Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام unusually more than them who were older than him. Therefore, this made them envy him. And it is also possible that they had somehow found out about the dream of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which may have led them to become uncomfortable at the prospect of his coming rise in status, and which may have made them envious of him. They talked about it among themselves: We see that our father loves Yūsuf and his brother Benyāmin much more than us, although we are ten of us and older than them. We have the ability and group strength to manage the affairs of the family while they both are small children who cannot do much. Our father should have noticed this and we are the ones he should have been loving more. But, what he is doing is open injustice. Therefore, you should either kill Yūsuf, or throw him away into some far out spot of land from where he could not come back.

In this verse, these brothers have referred to themselves as: عُصْبَةٌ (*'uṣbah*). This word is used in the Arabic for a group from five to ten. As for their remark about their father: إِنَّ أَبَانَا لَفِي ضَلَٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ (Surely, our father is in clear error), the word: ضَلَال (*ḍalāl*) appearing here lexically means the error of straying. But, at this place, *ḍalāl* or error does not mean religious error. If so, such a connotation would have made all of them Kāfirs (disbelievers) - because, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام is an exalted prophet of Allah Ta'ālā and such a thought in his case is an absolute Kufr.

And about the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, it has been mentioned in the Qur'ān itself that they, later on, admitted their crime and requested their father to pray for their forgiveness which he accepted to do. This makes it obvious that their mistake was forgiven. Now, this can become possible only when all of them are believers - otherwise, the prayer for the forgiveness of a disbeliever is not permissible. This is the reason why there is no difference of opinion about their being believers, although 'Ulamā' do differ about these brothers being prophets. This tells

us that the word: ضَلَال (*ḍalāl*: error) has been uttered at this place in the sense that he does not treat brothers equally in the matter of their rights.

The third verse (9) describes how the brothers exchanged opinions among themselves. Some suggested that Yūsuf be killed. Others opted for throwing him into a desolate pit so that the thorn in their side could be removed and they could thus become the sole recepients of their father's attention. As for the sin they would be earning for themselves by killing or throwing him in a pit, that was something which could be taken care of later when they could repent for what they did and thus become righteous. This is the meaning of the sentence: وَتَكُونُوا مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦ قَوْمًا صَٰلِحِينَ (and after that you may become a righteous people) according to some reports. And the verse could also be taken to mean that things will come out right for them after the killing of Yūsuf because that focus of the father's attention on Yūsuf will not be there anymore, or that they would, once they have apologized to their father after the killing of Yūsuf, become normal as they were.

This proves that these brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were not prophets because, in this case, they had committed many major sins, such as, the intention to kill someone innocent, disobedience to their father and causing pain to him, contravention of pledge, conspiracy, and things like that. Such sins, according to the Muslim consensus, cannot be committed by the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, even before they are ordained to be one.

Mentioned in the fourth verse (10) is that, hearing this whole conversation, one of these brothers advised that Yūsuf should not be killed. If something has to be done, let him be thrown into some pit of a well where he could remain alive so that when wayfarers stop at this well, they would take him out and away. Thus, it would serve their purpose while they would not have to take the trouble of traveling with him to some far out place. Some caravan passing this way would itself do this for them by taking him away to some distant destination.

The giver of this advice was their eldest brother, Yahūdā (Judah). Some narrations report that Ruebel (Rueben) was the eldest and it was he who gave this advice. And this is the same person mentioned later,

that is, he was the one who, when Benyāmin, the younger brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was detained in Egypt, came forward and said: How am I going to face my father when I go to him without him with me, therefore, I am not going back to Can'aan.

The expression used in this verse is: غَيَابَةِ الْجُبِّ (*ghayābatil-jubb*: bottom of a pit). Literally, *ghayābah* means everything which hides something in or makes it disappear. Therefore, a grave is also called *ghayābah*. And *jubb* refers to a well without raised sidings.

Another word: يَلْتَقِطْهُ (*yaltaqiṭhu*) appearing in the next sentence: يَلْتَقِطْهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ (so that some wayfarer picks him up) needs explanation. This word: اِلْتِقَاط (*iltiqāṭ*) is a derivation from: لقطه (*luqṭah*). The word: لقطه (*luqṭah*) refers to something left or dropped which is found by someone without having the desire to have it. If it is inert, it is called *luqṭah*, and if it is live, it is identified as *laqīṭ* (لقيط) in the terminology of Muslim jurists. A human being will be called a *laqīṭ* when he or she is a child, not rational and pubert. It is from this word that Al-Qurṭubī proves that, when Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was thrown in the pit of a well, he was a non-pubert child. In addition to that, the saying of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ that 'I fear lest a wolf should devour him (13)' also indicates his being a child - because, the likelihood of being eaten up by a wolf can only be imagined in the case of a child. As reported by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Shaiybah, the age of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was seven years at that time.

Some rules about the disposal of something owned by an unknown person (*luqṭah*)

At this place, Imām Al-Qurṭubī has given details of Islamic legal injunctions relating to '*luqṭah*' and '*laqīṭ*' for which this is not the appropriate occasion. However, it is necessary to understand a matter of principle operative in this connection. Islam has a system of its own in which the protection of the life and property of common people, the upkeep and cleanliness of walkways and streets, and similar other civic duties, have not been left in the sole charge of the departments of the government. Instead of that, it has made everyone obligated to the duty of keeping them safe and clean. The Ḥadīth has sternly warned those who make things difficult for passersby by crowding or lingering or depositing or throwing their belongings on public walkways and streets. It says: 'The Jihād of a

person who blocks or clogs the passageway of Muslims is not acceptable.' Similarly, there is the instance of thorns or nails or broken glass or rocks and things like that which may be lying on walkways and which pose a danger of hurting others. Islam has not made their removal from public thoroughfare the sole responsibility of a city council or municipal board. Instead of that, it has made every believing Muslim responsible for it. Of course, it does that in a mode of persuasion and great reward and *thawāb* has been promised for those who do so.

If, on this principle, the property lost by a person is found by someone, his Islamic legal responsibility does not remain simply limited to not stealing it - it goes much beyond that. In fact, it also becomes his responsibility that he must pick it up as an article of trust, keep it safe, make an announcement, look for the owner and, when he finds him and his description of the lost property before him makes him sure that the lost property does belong to him, then, he should give it to him. And when, despite his announcement and search, the owner remains untraced and, given the general valuation and status of the lost property, one becomes convinced that its owner is not going to look for it anymore, then, one has two choices. If he himself is poor, he may use it personally; if not, he should give it in charity to those poor and needy. However, in both these situations, the lost property thus used shall be taken as *ṣadaqah* (charity) from the owner. The *thawāb* for it shall reach the owner - as if, it was deposited in his name in the Treasury of the Heavens.

These are golden principles of public service and social self-help. The responsibility of putting them in regular practice has been placed on every individual of an Islamic society. Only if Muslims would understand their religion and start acting in accordance with it, they will be noticed by the whole world with surprise as to how do they accomplish things so easily and so effectively, things which big departments of governments fail to accomplish at the cost of millions and billions.

Appearing in the fifth (111) and sixth (112) verse is the request of these brothers before their father in which they wondered why he would not trust them with Yūsuf, although they wished him fully well. So, they pleaded, he should send him along with them to enjoy himself freely by eating and drinking and playing with them and that they all shall be there to take care of him.

The tone of the very request made by the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ indicates that they had already made such a request earlier too which was not accepted by their father. Therefore, in the present request, they seem to have tried to assure their father with added effort and insistence.

Permissibility of a trip for pleasure

In this verse, the permission sought from Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ is to go for an outing and have the freedom to enjoy eating and playing together. This was something Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ did not disallow at all. He only showed his reluctance in sending Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ with them, which will appear in the next verse. From here we find out that going out to enjoy and play is allowed under permissible limits. Authentic Aḥādīth too seem to indicate its justification. But, the condition is that in this activity of fun and games, there should be no transgression of the limits set by the Sharī'ah, nor should it be mixed up with any act not permissible there. (Qurṭubī & others)

When the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ requested their father that he should send Yūsuf with them on a recreational outing, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ told them that he did not favour sending him out for two reasons: (1) He remains uncomfortable without him in sight and (2) he apprehends that, in the wilderness out there, it might so happen that they become neglectful at some time and a wolf might eat him up.

The apprehension of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ may have been caused either due to the abundance of wolves in Can'aan, or because he had seen in a dream that he is standing on top of a hill and Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ is there on the slope downhill. All of a sudden ten wolves surround him and try to attack him. But, one of the wolves came forward to rescue him from the rest. Once released, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ took refuge inside the terrain.

The interpretation of that dream manifested later when it turned out that the ten wolves were these ten brothers and the wolf which defended Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ and saved him from being killed was his elder brother, Yahūdā (Judah). And the depth of the pit was the interpretation of his hiding under the land.

In a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ, it has been re-

ported that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, because of this dream, felt the danger of an unfortunate situation coming at the hands of these brothers. Thus, in fact, they were the ones he had alluded to as wolves - but, in consideration of his wisdom, he did not lay the truth bare. (Qurṭubī)

After hearing what Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said, those brothers countered it by saying that his apprehension was strange in view of the presence of a strong group of the ten of them to protect Yūsuf. If a wolf could be expected to eat up Yūsuf despite their being there to guard him, it would render their very presence around him totally senseless. If so, they could not be taken as good for anything.

Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, acting with the elegance of a great prophet he was, did not say it plainly before his children that it was they about whom he feared a foul play because, firstly it would have been a painful statement to make against all of them and, secondly, there was the danger that such a statement from the father would have increased the enmity of the brothers to higher proportions - that is, if they somehow abandoned their idea of killing him now, they might have done so at some later occasion under some other excuse. For this reason, he allowed them to go. But, he did make sure that the brothers give him a solemn pledge that they would see that no harm comes to Yūsuf. As added precaution, he entrusted him with his elder brother Ruebel (Rueben) or Yahūdā (Judah) so that they specially take care of his needs there and see that he returns soon and safe. The brothers lifted Yūsuf up on their shoulders, and kept doing so one by one. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb followed them upto a certain distance to bid them farewell.

When these people, as described by Al-Qurṭubī following historical narrations, disappeared from the sight of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, the brother on whose shoulders Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was perched threw him down on the ground. He started walking by himself. But, being too small, he could not keep pace with them and tried to seek help from another brother. He remained cold. So did every brother he went to for help. They told him that he better call for help those eleven stars, the Sun and the Moon he had seen prostrating to him - they should help him.

From here, Al-Qurṭubī concludes that the brothers had somehow

found out about the dream of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. That dream became the cause of their extreme hostility.

Finally, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام appealed to Yahūdā as his elder brother telling him about his plight. He was weak and small and needed protection, at least for the sake of their old father to whom they had given the pledge to help him. Yahūdā was moved and he told him that until he was alive, he would not let these brothers hurt him.

Thus, when Allah Ta'ālā put mercy in the heart of Yahūdā and the ability to do what was right, he told the other brothers of his that killing someone sinless was an extremely grave sin, therefore, they should fear Allah and take the innocent child back to his father. However, to make things easy on them, they could take a pledge from him that he would not complain to him in any way about their behaviour.

The brothers told Yahūdā: We know what you mean. You wish to rise higher than us in the sight of our father. So, you better listen to us. If you do anything to resist our intention, we shall kill you too. When Yahūdā realized that he alone could do nothing against his nine brothers, he told them: Well, if you have decided to get rid of this child, then, listen to me carefully. There is an old well nearby with a lot of wild growth in it and now a home for many lethal crawlers. Put him in that well. If a snake or scorpion bites and kills him there, you shall have what you are looking for. Thus, you shall remain free of the blame of shedding his blood by your own hands. And, in case, he still remains alive, then, may be there comes a caravan this way, lowers its bucket to draw water from it and finds him instead. It is likely that they would take him away with them to some other country in which case too you would have achieved your objective.

To this, all brothers agreed - as stated in the ninth of the present verses (15) cited above in the following words:

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا بِهٖ وَاَجْمَعُوْٓا اَنْ يَّجْعَلُوْهُ فِىْ غَيٰبَتِ الْجُبِّ وَاَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُمْ بِاَمْرِهِمْ هٰذَا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ

'So, when they went with him and were determined to put him in the bottom of a pit (which they did). And We revealed to him (Yūsuf), 'You will (one day) tell them of this deed of theirs while they will not recognize (you).'

Here, the word: وَاَوۡحَيۡنَآ (And We revealed) is the principal clause of the preceding conditional clause: فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوۡا (when they went). The letter: واؤ (and) at this place in the former is *zā'idah* i.e. has no meaning (Qurṭubī). The sense is: When the brothers did finally decide to throw Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into the pit of the well, Allah Ta'ālā revealed to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام words of comfort for him in which he has been given the glad tidings that some time in the future he will meet his brothers and that it will be a time when he would be free of any need of help from these brothers, rather, would have an upperhand over them. And by virtue of these changed circumstances, he would be in a position to take account of their unjust treatment meted out to their younger brother while they themselves would be unaware of the whole matter.

Imām Al-Qurṭubī says that there could be two possible situations in this connection: (1) That the revelation came to him after he was thrown in the pit of the well and that it was to give him comfort in that state and to give him the good news that he would be delivered soon from this ordeal. (2) That Allah Ta'ālā had, much before he was thrown into the pit of the well, oriented Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with conditions and events he would face through a revelation in which he was also told that he would come out of this death-trap safely and that particular conditions will unravel when he would have the opportunity to admonish these brothers who would not even recognize him at that time as their own brother, Yūsuf.

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, this revelation which came to him during the time of his childhood was not the commonly recognized *waḥy* or revelation sent to prophets - because, that is conferred on them at the age of forty. In fact, this was a revelation similar to that which was sent to the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. The usual channel of revelation as received by prophets started when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had reached Egypt and attained maturity - as stated in the Qur'ān: وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗۤ اٰتَيۡنٰهُ حُكۡمًا وَّعِلۡمًا (And when he reached at the prime of his age, We gave him wisdom and knowledge - 22). And Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and others have taken this revelation to be nothing but prophetic, though in an exceptional way, as was the case of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام who was invested with prophethood during his childhood. (Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said: 'After he had reached

Egypt, Allah Ta'ālā had forbidden Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام through a revelation that he should not report his circumstances back to his home. (Qurṭubī) This was the reason why a prophet of Allah like Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not - even after having been released from the prison and later having the reins of the government of Egypt in his hands - make an effort to find a way through which he could have provided relief to his old and afflicted father by sending to him a message that he was safe and set.

Who knows or could know the wisdom of Allah *jalla thana'uh* hidden behind this arrangement? Perhaps, of the many considerations, it may also be His will that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام be sounded out that such boundless love for someone other than Allah was not ideally favour-worthy - and that by making those brothers come to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in need, the purpose may be to mildly censure him too for his conduct.

At this point, Imām Al-Qurṭubī and other commentators have described the event of the lowering of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into the pit of the well. When his brothers started doing that, he clung to the outer edge of the well. They took his shirt out and tied his hands with it. At that time, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام pleaded for mercy from his brothers once again. But, once again, he got the same answer: Call those eleven stars who prostrate to you, let them help you. Then, they put him in a bucket and lowered him down into the well. When he was down as far as half the depth of the well, they cut off the rope releasing the bucket for a free fall. But, Allah being the protector of His prophet, saved him when he remained unhurt as he fell into the water. There was a protruding rock close to him. Safe and sound, he sat on it. According to some narrations, a command was given to Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام who put him on the rock.

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام remained in that well for three days. Hiding away from others, his brother, Yahūdā, brought food and water for him every day and lowered it down to him through a bucket.

As in verse 16: وَجَآءُوٓ أَبَاهُمْ عِشَآءً يَبْكُونَ : They came weeping to their father at nightfall. Hearing the sound of their crying, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام came out and asked: What has happened? Was the flock of your goats attacked by someone? And where is Yūsuf? The brothers, then, said:

يَٰٓأَبَانَآ إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ عِندَ مَتَٰعِنَا فَأَكَلَهُ ٱلذِّئْبُ وَمَآ أَنتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَّنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَٰدِقِينَ

Father, we went running races and left Yūsuf with our belongings and the wolf ate him up. And you will never believe us, even though we are telling the truth.

Some rules about racing

In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Ibn al-'Arabī has said: Running races against each other is legitimate in the Sharī'ah. It is a good habit which comes handy in Jihād. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, as proved by authentic Aḥādīth, has personally participated in such running of races. Also proved is making horses run against each other (not to be confused with institutionalized horse-racing with bets, as clarified later). Out of the noble Companions, Sayyidnā Salamah ibn al-Akwa' رضي الله عنه ran a one-on-one race against a person and won it.

That the racing of horses as such is permissible stands proved from the verse under reference and from Ḥadīth reports cited above. In addition to the racing of horses, mutual competition in racing and archery and in other fields is also permissible, and equally permissible is the giving of awards from a third party to the winner in this mutual competition. But, fixing an amount of money in a bilateral agreement that the loser will pay it to the winner is gambling or Qimār which has been declared Ḥarām or unlawful by the Holy Qur'ān. Today, none of the prevailing forms of horse racing is free from gambling and Qimār. Therefore, all of them are Ḥarām, impermissible and unlawful.

Mentioned in the previous verses was that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, after talking to each other back and forth, finally put him down in a desolate well and returned to their father telling him that he has been eaten up by a wolf. From verse 18, the story onwards has been taken up in the following words: وَجَآءُو عَلَىٰ قَمِيصِهِۦ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ (And they came with fake blood on his shirt) that is, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام came back with his shirt they had smeared in fake blood so that they could make their father believe that he has been eaten up by a wolf.

But, Allah Ta'ālā had His way of exposing their lie. He made them neglect something else they should have done besides smearing the shirt with fake blood. Had they also torn the shirt, it would proved his being

eaten up by a wolf. Here they were coming with an intact shirt smeared with the blood of a kid goat and trying to deceive their father. After seeing this shirt totally unscratched, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said: My sons, certainly wise was this wolf who ate Yūsuf in a way that his shirt was not torn from anywhere.

Thus, their deceit was exposed before Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام and he said:

بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ وَاللّٰهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلٰى مَا تَصِفُوْنَ

> Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best. And it is Allah whose help is sought against what you describe.

Two Rulings:

1. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has used the intact shirt as evidence to establish that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were lying. This tells us that a Qāḍī or judge should also keep an eye on circumstancial evidence alongwith the claims and arguments of the parties concerned (Qurṭubī).

Al-Māwardī has said: The legendary shirt of Yūsuf is a wonder of the world in its own way. Three great events of prophetic annals are connected with his shirt: (I) The first event relates to the smearing of the shirt with fake blood, cheating a father and the evidence of the shirt which established the lie. (II) The second event relates to Zulaikhā in which it is the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which appears as the conclusive evidence. (III) The third event relates to the return of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb's eyesight in which it is the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which stands out as the cause of that miracle.

2. Some 'Ulamā have said that the comment: بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا (Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something - 18) made at this time before his sons was also made at the time when Benyāmin, the real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, was detained in Egypt having been charged with theft. When his brothers reported this incident to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, he said: بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ (Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something - 83). Worth pondering here is that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had made both these comments as based on his opinion. The first of them turned out to be true; the other was not - because, in this,

the brothers were not to be blamed. This tells us that a wrong personal opinion is possible even from prophets initially - though, later on, they are not left to stand by that wrong opinion by means of Divine revelation.

According to Al-Qurṭubī, it proves that an error of opinion can be committed by the highest of the high. Therefore, every man or woman of opinion should take his or her opinion as suspect, and should not become so rigid about it as not to be ready to listen or entertain what others have to say.

There is No Chance or Accident in Divine Arrangements

It is said in verse 19: 'وَجَآءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُوا وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَى دَلْوَهُ' (And there came some wayfarers and sent one of them to go for water. So, he let down his bucket). The word: سَيَّارَةٌ (*sayyāra*) means wayfarers or a caravan. Wārid (وارد) is a person who moves ahead of the caravan as its vanguard. Such a person is responsible for taking care of the needs of the caravan, water being one of them. Idlā' (ادلاء) means to lower the bucket into the well to draw water. The sense is that a caravan passed by this part of land by chance. According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, this caravan was coming from Syria on its way to Egypt. Having lost its bearing, it strayed into this desolate place and sent some of his men to bring water from the well.

That the Syrian caravan lost its regular route, reached that exact spot and decided to send their water-carrier to that deserted well is a sequence of events which is referred to by people as accidental. But, the knower of the secret of the creation knows that all these events are chains of a system which is breathtakingly coordinated and formidable. It is but the Creator of Yūsuf, and his Protector, who moves the caravan away from its set route and brings it here and sends its men to this deserted well. This is a mirror of all other states and events which common people see as accidental happenings - and philosophers as contingents - all of which is based on an unawareness of how the system of the universe really works. Otherwise, in creation, there is no chance or accident (which Einstein, though no formal believer, did concede: 'God does not play dice!'). However, the most true Creator of the universe is known by the majesty of His unique state of being. He is, as the Qur'ān declares:

فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ

Doer of what He intends - 85:16

His wisdom works in unimaginable ways when He creates conditions and circumstances which do not seem to synchronize with the obvious sequence of events. When this happens, one fails to comprehend the reality, and takes what he does not understand as something accidental.

However, their man whose name has been identified as Mālik ibn Du'bar reached that well, lowered his bucket which Yūsuf saw as Divine help coming down. He took hold of the rope. Up it came with no water but with the shining face of someone whose instant mystique of beauty and signs of forthcoming spiritual excellence were no less impressive than the real greatness he was going to achieve in the future. Intrigued, surprised and flushed with delight, the man looked at this young, handsome and promising child coming suddenly face to face before him emerging from the depths of a well and making him exclaim: يٰبُشْرٰى هٰذَا غُلٰمٌ (What a good news! This is a boy). In the Ḥadīth concerning the Night of Mi'rāj (the Ascent to the Heavens) appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: 'When I met Yūsuf عليه السلام, I saw that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed him with half of the beauty of the whole world, while the other half has been spread over the rest of it.'

Following immediately after is the statement: وَأَسَرُّوهُ بِضَاعَةً (And they kept him hidden as merchandise). It means that Mālik ibn Du'bar, when he first saw this boy, did exclaim taken by surprise. But, an afterthought over the matter made him decide not to let this be known. Instead, he thought, he would keep him hidden from others so that he could sell him for good money later. He did not want the caravan to know about it for the whole caravan would then be claiming a share in the money so acquired.

However, the expression could also mean that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, by concealing the truth of the matter, themselves made him into merchandise. This is as it appears in some narrations where it is said that Yahūdā used to carry food to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام every day while he was in the well. On the third day, when he did not find him there, he returned to his brothers and told them about it. Together, they

went there, made investigations, and found him with the people of the caravan. They told them: This boy is our slave. He has escaped and you have done something bad by detaining him in your possession. Mālik ibn Du'bar and his companions were scared lest they be taken as thieves. Therefore, they started talking about a deal to purchase him from the brothers.

Thus, the verse would come to mean that the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ themselves made him into merchandise and sold him out. After that it was said: وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ ؕ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ (while Allah was aware of what they were doing). The sense is that Allah Ta'ālā, in His perfect knowledge, was fully aware of what the legendary brothers of Yūsuf would do, and also that which will be done by the people of the caravan who would buy him. Allah Ta'ālā had all power to undo the designs of both, but it was under His own wise considerations that He let these designs carry on.

In this sentence, according to Ibn Kathīr, there is an element of guidance for the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well. It tells him that nothing his people are doing to him, or will do in the future, is outside the scope of Allah's knowledge and power. He could, if He so willed, change everything and everyone outright. But, wisdom demanded that they be allowed to show their power at this time. Finally, by making him overcome them, it will be truth itself seen triumphant over them - as was done in the case of Yūsuf ﷺ.

Verse 20 begins with the words: وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ ۭ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُوْدَةٍ (And they sold him for a paltry price, for a few silver-coins, and they were disinterested in him). In Arabic, the word: شرا (*shira'*) is used for buying and selling both. The probability of both meanings exists here. If the pronoun is reverted back to the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, it will mean selling - and if applied to the people of the caravan, it would mean buying. Thus, the sense would be: 'the brothers of Yūsuf sold him - or, the people of the caravan bought him - for a paltry price, that is, for a counted few *dirhams* in return.'

Al-Qurṭubī says: The Arab traders used to transact deals involving big amounts by weight while, for amounts not more than forty, they would go by count. Therefore, the word: مَعْدُوْدَة (*ma'dūdah*: few) used with:

دَرَاهِم (*darāhim*: plural of *dirham*: silver-coins) tells us that the count of *dirhams* was less than forty. Ibn Kathīr, citing the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ, has written that the deal was closed at twenty *dirhams* which the ten brothers had divided among themselves at the rate of two *dirhams* per person. As for the exact amount of *dirhams,* reported there are other narrations as well which put them as twenty two and forty. (Ibn Kathīr)

In the last sentence of the verse: وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ (and they were disinterested in him), the word: الزاهدين (*az-zāhidīn*) is the plural of *zāhid* which is a derivation from *zuhd.* Literally, *zuhd* means indifference, disinterestedness. In usage, the lack of interest in and the avoidance of wealth and property in worldly life is referred to as *zuhd.* The meaning of the verse is that the brothers of Yūsuf were really not interested in any financial gain for themselves in this matter. Their real purpose was to separate Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from their father. Therefore, they struck a deal for a very few *dirhams.*

Verses 21 -23

وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرٰهُ مِنْ مِّصْرَ لِامْرَاَتِهٖٓ اَكْرِمِيْ مَثْوٰهُ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّنْفَعَنَآ
اَوْ نَتَّخِذَهٗ وَلَدًا ۭ وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوْسُفَ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۡ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهٗ مِنْ
تَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحَادِيْثِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَالِبٌ عَلٰٓي اَمْرِهٖ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۲۱﴾ وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗٓ اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا ۭ وَكَذٰلِكَ
نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿۲۲﴾ وَرَاوَدَتْهُ الَّتِيْ هُوَ فِيْ بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ
وَغَلَّقَتِ الْاَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ ۭ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ اِنَّهٗ رَبِّيْٓ اَحْسَنَ
مَثْوَايَ ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾

And the one who bought him from Egypt said to his wife, "Make his stay graceful. He may be useful for us. Or, we may adopt him as a son." And thus We established Yūsuf in the land, so that We should teach him the interpretation of events. And Allah is powerful in (enforcing) His command, but most of the people do not know. [21]

And when he reached the prime of his age, We gave him wisdom and knowledge, and this is how We reward those good in deeds. [22]

And she, in whose house he was, seduced him away from his (resisting) self and bolted the doors, and said, "come on!" He said, "May Allah save me. Surely, he is my master. He has given me a good lodging. Surely, the wrongdoers do not prosper." [23]

Commentary

Described in the previous verses was an early account of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام as to how the people from the caravan took him out of the well, and how his brothers made him out to be their escaped slave and traded him for a few *dirhams*. First of all, they did not know the value and station of their great brother. Secondly, their real purpose was not to make money by selling him - they wanted to remove him away from his father. Therefore, they did not stop at simply selling him because they felt the danger that the caravan may somehow leave him behind as a result of which he may somehow reach their father and tell him all about their conspiracy. So, according to a report from Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, these people waited for the caravan to leave with him for Egypt. When the caravan actually departed, they went with the caravan upto a certain distance warning them on the way that he is in the habit of running away, therefore, they should not leave him free to move around, better still, they should tie him up. Thus, the caravan, unaware of the precious 'merchandise' they were carrying with them, took him in that condition as far as Egypt. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

The part of the story as taken up onwards in the present verses shows the eloquent brevity of the Qur'ān when sections of the story which can be understood independently have not been necessarily described. For instance, the trip of the caravan through various stages enroute Egypt and the actual selling of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام there. All this has been skipped. Stated from here is:

وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرٰهُ مِنْ مِّصْرَ لِامْرَاَتِهٖٓ اَكْرِمِيْ مَثْوٰهُ

And the one who bought him from Egypt said to his wife, 'Make his stay graceful ...'.

According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, when the caravan reached Egypt and

offered him for sale, people vied with each other with increasing bids which rose to gold, to musk and to silk equal to his weight.

But, Allah Taʻālā had destined this human treasure to go to the most powerful authority of the time in Egypt, the ʻAzīz of Miṣr. He beat all the bids and bought Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

As we already know from the statement of the Holy Qur'ān, all these things happening were nothing accidental. Instead, they were parts of the formidable plan put into action by the most exalted Lord Himself. That Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام will be bought in Egypt by the highest of the high in that country was certainly a call of destiny. According to Ibn Kathīr, this man who bought Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in Egypt was what we may call the Finance Minister of Egypt. His name has been cited as Qiṭfīr, or ʻIṭfīr. The King of Egypt at that time was Ruiyyān ibn Usayd, an Amalkite (who, later on, embraced Islam at the hands of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام) and died as a Muslim during the lifetime of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام (Maẓharī). The name of the wife of the ʻAzīz of Egypt who had bought him has been given as Raʻeel, or Zulaikhā. So, the ʻAzīz of Miṣr, called Qiṭfīr (Potiphar), instructed his wife to provide good lodging for Yūsuf, not to treat him like common slaves and see that good arrangements are made for him.

Sayyidnā ʻAbdullāh ibn Masʻūd رضي الله عنه said: 'Three men turned out to be the best physiognomists of the world: (1) The ʻAzīz of Miṣr who discovered the inner excellence of Yūsuf عليه السلام from his outer appearance and gave those instructions to his wife; (2) the daughter of Sayyidnā Shuʻayb عليه السلام who told her father about Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام: يٰٓاَبَتِ اسْتَاْجِرْهُ اِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَاْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْاَمِيْنُ (O my father, retain him on wages. Surely, the best one for you to employ is the one who is strong and trustworthy - 28:26); (3) The third person is Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه who chose Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه to be the Khalīfah after the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Ibn Kathīr)

The next sentence of the verse is: وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوْسُفَ فِي الْاَرْضِ (And thus We established Yūsuf in the land ...). Given here is the good news of what would happen in the future, that is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who has entered the House of the Azīz of Miṣr at this time as a slave shall soon be the highest ranking man in the country of Egypt when the power of governance comes into his hands.

In the statement which follows immediately after, that is: وَلِنُعَلِّمَهٗ مِنْ تَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحَادِيْثِ (so that We should teach him the interpretation of events), if the letter واؤ (*wāw*) appearing at the begining of the sentence is taken as: عطف (*'atf* : conjunctive), a sentence will be considered as understood which will mean that 'We established Yūsuf in the land so that he brings forth peace in the world through equity and justice, works towards the economic and social betterment of the people of the country, and so that We teach him to put things right where they belong. The general sense of the later is something which is inclusive of the comprehension of Divine revelation, its implementation in practice, and the acquisition of all supportive areas of knowledge, and the correct interpretation of dreams as well.

Verse 21 ends with the statement: وَاللّٰهُ غَالِبٌ عَلٰٓى اَمْرِهٖ (And Allah is powerful in (enforcing) His command ...). In other words, it means that Allah Ta'ālā is powerful and fully in control over what He wills and when He does so will, all outward chains of causes in this world start falling in line with His will - as said the Holy Prophet ﷺ in a Ḥadīth: 'When Allah Ta'ālā intends to do something, He makes all worldly causes ready to act accordingly.' But, says the last part of the sentence: وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ that is, most of the people do not understand this reality. They have their eyes on obvious causes. These they take to be everything and keep going after them all the time. That there is the Causer of all Causes and the Holder of Absolute Power over everything is a thought they would seldom pay heed to.

In the first sentence of the second verse (22), it is said: وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗٓ اٰتَيْنٰهُ حُكْمًا وَّعِلْمًا (And when he reached at the prime of his age, We gave him wisdom and knowledge ...).

At what age did he reach the prime of his age? In this, commentators differ. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Mujāhid and Qatādah رحمهم الله تعالى say that his age was thirty three years. Ḍaḥḥāk رحمه الله تعالى puts it at twenty, and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى at forty. However, all of them agree that the bestowing of wisdom and knowledge upon him referred to at this place means the bestowal of Nubūwwah, the station of prophethood. This also tells us that Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was invested with Nubūwwah much later than his arrival in Egypt - and the Waḥy (revelation) sent to him while he was in the depth of the well was not the Waḥy(reve-

lation) technically identified with Nubūwwah. Instead of that, it was a revelation in the literal sense which can also be sent to non-prophets - as it has appeared in the case of the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, and about Sayyidah Maryam.

In the second sentence of the second verse (22), it was said: وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ (and this is how We reward those good in deeds). The sense is that delivering Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from elimination and making him reach the office of power and honour was an outcome of his righteousness, fear of Allah and good deeds. This was something not restricted to his person alone. In fact, whoever acts the way he did, shall receive the blessings of Allah in the same fashion.

Moving to verse 23, the words of the text are:

وَرَاوَدَتْهُ الَّتِىْ هُوَ فِىْ بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ وَغَلَّقَتِ الْاَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ

And she, in whose house he was, seduced him away from his (resisting) self and bolted the doors, and said, 'come on!'.

From the first verse, we know that this woman was the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr. But, at this place, the Holy Qur'ān has elected to bypass the possibility of mentioning her by a brief expression as the wife of 'Azīz. Instead, it has chosen to use the expression: الَّتِىْ هُوَ فِىْ بَيْتِهَا (in whose house he was). The hint given here is that the efforts of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to save himself from falling into sin were further complicated by the fact that he lived in the house of this very woman, under her protection, and as such, disapproving and discarding her verbal advance was no easy task.

The Strongest Defence Against Sin is the Seeking of Protection from Allah Himself

How was he able to do that? There was an outward cause to this. When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام found himself surrounded from all sides, he took the ultimate recourse. So, like a prophet he was, first of all, he sought the protection of Allah. He said: قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ (May Allah save me!). We see that he did not place his sole trust in his determination and resolve to hold out against the invitation to sin - he sought the refuge of Allah first. And it is obvious that anyone who enjoys the protection of Allah can never be moved away from the right path by anyone. It was only after having that coverage, that he started acting as a prophet

would, with wisdom and earnest good counsel. Addressing Zulaikhā directly and personally, he advised her that she too should fear Allah and give up her intention. He said:

إِنَّهُ رَبِّيٓ أَحۡسَنَ مَثۡوَايَ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفۡلِحُ الظّٰلِمُونَ

> Surely, he is my master. He has given me a good lodging. Surely, the wrongdoers do not prosper.

As obvious, it means: Your husband, the 'Azīz of Miṣr is my master who has raised and supported me and has given me a good home to live in. He is my benefactor. How can I even think of violating his honour? This is great injustice and those who commit injustice never prosper. Implied therein was a lesson for Zulaikhā too who was told: When I know his rights on me for having been my master and caretaker for a lesser time than you, then, being his wedded wife of years, you should certainly know his rights on you much more than I do.

At this place, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has called the 'Azīz of Miṣr his Rabb - though, it is not permissible to use this word for anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā. The reason is that words like this create either a suspicion of Shirk, or a resemblance with those who commit Shirk. Therefore, the use of such words has been prohibited in the Sharī'ah of Islam. It appears in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: 'Let no slave call his master his Rabb and let no master call his slave his *'abd* or servant.' But, this is a unique characteristic of the Islamic Sharī'ah where, alongwith the prohibition of Shirk, everything else in which there is the least doubt that they may become the conduits of Shirk has also been prohibited. In the religious codes of past prophets, though Shirk has been strictly blocked but there was no restriction placed on the sources and inlets of Shirk. This was the reason why depiction of images was not prohibited in past religious codes. But in the Sharī'ah of Islam, being valid upto the Last Day, full attention was given to protect it from being affected by Shirk. So, the sources and mediums of Shirk, such as, image and words - which arouse suspicion of Shirk were also prohibited. However, the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام : إِنَّهُ رَبِّي (Surely, he is my master), was correct in its place.

And it is also possible that the pronoun in: إِنَّهُ (*innahū*) reverts to Allah Ta'ālā which would mean that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had called

Allah his Rabb and it was He who, in the real sense, gave him good lodging, and that disobedience to Him was the greatest injustice, and that the unjust never prosper.

Some commentators, Suddīyy, Ibn Isḥāq and others have reported that during the course of this privacy, Zulaikhā started praising his looks with the purpose of softening his resistance. She said: How beautiful are your hair! Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: After death, these hair will be the first to part away from my body. Then, she said: How beautiful are your eyes! He said: After death, they will become water and flow down my face. Once again, she said: How beautiful is your face! Thereupon, he said: All this will be eaten up by the earth below. He was looking ahead. This was his concern for the 'Ākhirah. Allah Ta'ālā had set it upon him in the prime of his youth and that made all charms of mortal life turn into dust before him. It is true that the concern for 'Ākhirah is something which can keep every human being protected from every evil wherever he or she may be. May Allah bless us all with this concern.

Verse 24

وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهٖ ۚ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَآ اَنْ رَّاٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهٖ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ
عَنْهُ السُّوْٓءَ وَالْفَحْشَآءَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾

And she certainly desired him. And he had desired her - had he not seen the proof from his Lord (he could have indulged). This We did to turn away from him evil and lewdness. Surely, he is among Our chosen slaves. [24]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verse was the great trial and test of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in that the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr bolted the doors and tried to invite him to sin assembling together in that effort all circumstancial temptations to attract and to make him become indulgent. But, Almighty Allah kept this righteous young person standing steadfast in such severe trial. The details of what transpired have been given in this verse. Said here is that Zulaikhā was busy persuing her obsessive thought any way, but emerging in the heart of Sayyidnā Yūsuf too, there was some non-voluntary tilt towards her as would be the natural conse-

quence in such a situation. But, it was exactly at that time that Allah Ta'ālā brought before Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام His argument and proof, because of which, that non-voluntary tilt, rather than increase, actually died out totally - and, beating the pursuit, he ran.

In this verse, the word: هَمّ (*hamm* : thought) has been attributed to Zulaikhā and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام both as in: وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهٖ وَهَمَّ بِهَا (And she desired him. And he had desired her). And we know that the '*hamm*' or thought of Zulaikhā was that of sin. This could have raised a doubt that the 'thought' of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام may also have been of a similar nature - and this is, based on the consensus of the entire Muslim Ummah, contrary to the great station of a Nabiyy (prophet) and Rasūl. The reason is that the majority of the Muslim Ummah holds the standard belief that the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, are protected against all sorts of sins, minor or major. As for a major sin, it can neither be committed by them intentionally, nor is it possible through inadvertance or mistake. However, the probability that a minor sin could be committed through inadvertance or mistake does exist - but, on this too, the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, are not allowed to remain - instead, they are warned and made to move away from it. (*Musāmarah*)

Besides the fact that this question of the 'Iṣmah of Anbiyā' (the state of being under Divine protection with which prophets are blessed) stands settled and proved under the authority of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, it is also necessary, rationally too - because, should there remain the probability of a committal of sin by the Anbiyā' عليهم السلام, there remains no way one could place trust in the Dīn (religion) and Waḥy (revelation) brought by them, and that their very coming into the world with a Divine Book revealed to them becomes totally fruitless. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā has kept every prophet of His totally *ma'ṣūm* from every sin (*ma'ṣūm:* technically, sinless or infallible; literally, protected by Allah).

So, speaking generally, it stands established that the 'thought' which crossed the mind of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was not a thought to be counted in the degree of sin. For details, we should understand that the word: هَم (*hamm*: thought) in the Arabic language is used to convey two meanings: (1) Intend and be determined to do something; (2) a simple scruple in the heart or the appearance of a thought beyond one's control. In the first situation, it is included under sin, and is accountable. Howev-

er, should someone, after having made the intention, were to leave off this sin at his own choice just because of the fear of Allah, then, according to the Ḥadīth, Allah Ta'ālā replaces the sin and enters a good deed in his or her Book of Deeds. And in the second situation - that is, in the event there comes a simple scruple and non-voluntary thought, without any intention to put the thought into practice, for instance, a normal turn of thought towards cool water during the fasts of summer which is natural and experienced by almost everyone, though there is no intention there to go about drinking water while fasting. So, a thought like that is neither within one's control, nor is there any accountability and sin in it.

In a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: 'Allah Ta'ālā has forgiven the scruple and thought of sin for my Ummah - if not put into practice.' (Qurṭubī) And in the Ṣaḥīḥayn (the two Ṣaḥīḥs, that is, Al-Bukhārī and Muslim), it has been reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Allah Ta'ālā says to the angels: When My servant intends to do good, write a good deed in his or her Book of Deeds just because of that intention. And when he or she has completed this deed, write down ten good deeds. And if a servant intends to do a sin, then leaves it off due to the fear of Allah, write one good deed in his or her Book of Deeds in lieu of that sin. And if he or she does fall into that sin, write it as one sin only.' (Ibn Kathīr)

Al-Qurṭubī has, in his Tafsīr, proved the use of the word: هَمّ (*'hamm'*: thought) covering both these meanings through evidences from Arab usage and poetry.

This tells us that the word: *'hamm'* appearing in this verse has been attributed to both Zulaikhā and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام but there is a big difference between the *'hamm'* or thought of both. The former is included under sin while the other has the status of a non-voluntary scruple which is not included under sin. The descriptive style of the Holy Qur'ān is itself a testimony to this - because, had their *'hamm'* or thought been identical, it would have been sufficient to say it in a dual form, such as: وَلَقَدْ هَمَّا that is, the two of them desired, which was brief too. But, leaving this option aside, the *'hamm'* or thought of both was described separate from each other: هَمَّتْ بِهٖ وَهَمَّ بِهَا (And she certainly desired him. And he had

desired her). Then, added to the *'hamm'* or thought of Zulaikhā was the word of emphasis: لَقَدْ (*laqad*). With the *'hamm'* or thought of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, the emphasis of the letters: لام (*lām*) and: قد (*qad*) is not there. This tells us that, through this particular expression, the purpose is to emphasize that the *'hamm'* or thought of Zulaikhā was of some other nature while that of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, of some other.

According to a Ḥadīth in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, when this test was faced by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, the angels submitted before Allah Ta'ālā: This sincere servant of Yours is thinking of sin, though he knows its curse fully well. Allah Ta'ālā said: You wait. If he commits this sin, write what he has done in his Book of Deeds. And if he abstains from committing it, do not record it a sin, instead, enter a good deed in his Book of Deeds - because, he has surrendered his desire only out of fear for Me (which is doing good at its best) (Qurṭubī)

To sum up, it can be said that the thought or tilt generated in the heart of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was simply at the level of a non-voluntary scruple, which is not included under sin. Then, by acting against this scruple, his rank with Allah Ta'ālā rose much higher.

At this stage, some commentators have also pointed out to another construction of the verse. According to them, the statement: لَوْلَآ اَنْ رَّاٰبُرْهَانَ رَبِّهٖ (Had he not seen the proof from his Lord) which succeeds is really supposed to precede, in which case, the verse would mean that Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ would have also desired her had he not seen the proof from his Lord - but, because he had seen the proof from his Lord, he remained safe from this *'hamm'* or thought. Thematically, this too is correct. But, some other commentators have declared this construction as contrary to the rules of the Arabic grammar. Thus, considering this aspect, the first Tafsīr is weightier as it makes the Taqwā and chastity of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ rise to much higher levels since he, despite the human instinct, managed to stay safe from sin.

As for the statement: لَوْلَآ اَنْ رَّاٰ بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهٖ (Had he not seen the proof from his Lord) at the end, its principal clause is understood and it means: Had he not seen the proof from his Lord, he would have remained indulged in that thought, but after having seen the proof from his Lord, that non-voluntary thought and scruple too was eliminated from his

heart.

The Holy Qur'ān does not clarify as to what was that *'burhān'* or proof from his Lord which appeared before him. Therefore, statements of commentators differ in this matter. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Sa'id ibn Jubayr ﷺ, Mujāhid, Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمهم الله تعالى and others have said that Allah Ta'ālā made the face of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام appear miraculously before him in that private quarter showing him with his finger in his mouth and warning him. Some commentators say that it was the face of the 'Azīz of Miṣr which was presented before him. Some others have said: When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام looked towards the ceiling, he saw the following verse of the Qur'ān written there: لَاتَقْرَبُوا الزِّنٰىٓ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً ط وَسَآءَ سَبِيْلًا that is, do not go (even) near adultery because it is a grave act of immodesty and a very evil way (for human society). Some other commentators have said that Zulaikhā had an idol in her house. When she threw a curtain on this idol, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام asked the reason for it. She said: This is my object of worship. I cannot dare commit sin before it. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: My Rabb, the object of my worship certainly deserves that far more modesty be shown before Him for no curtain can stop His seeing. Finally, there are commentators who have said that the station of the prophet he was on and the knowledge of the Divine he had was itself the proof from his Lord.

After reporting all these sayings, what has been said by the Imām of Tafsīr, Ibn Jarīr, has been adjudged authoritatively as most-favoured and doubt-free. And he has said: As much as the Holy Qur'ān has to tell should be what has to be considered sufficient. In other words, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام saw something which made the scruple in his heart go away. To determine this precisely, there could be all those probabilities mentioned by the commentators - but, none of these can be held as certain absolutely. (Ibn Kathīr)

At the end of the verse it was said: كَذٰلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوْٓءَ وَالْفَحْشَآءَ ط اِنَّهٗ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِيْنَ (This We did to turn away from him evil and lewdness). Here, the word: السوء (*as-sū'* : evil) means minor sin (Saghīrah) and: الفحشاء (*al-fahshā'*: lewdness) means major sin (Kabīrah). (Maẓharī)

Noteworthy here is that the text mentions 'turning away evil and lewdness from Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام - and not 'Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from

evil and lewdness.' The hint implied here is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was, because of his great station of prophethood, already removed from this sin as far as he was personally concerned, but evil and immodesty had encircled him. So Allah broke that trap apart. These words of the Holy Qur'ān are also a testimony proving that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not succumb to even the minor-most sin and the thought which went accross his heart was not included under sin, otherwise the relevant expression would have been: 'We saved Yūsuf from sin' - and not: 'Turn away from him evil and lewdness.'

Said in the last sentence is: اِنَّهٗ مِنۡ عِبَادِنَا الۡمُخۡلَصِيۡنَ (Surely, he is among Our chosen slaves). The word: مُخۡلَصِيۡنَ (*mukhlaṣīn*) is the plural of *mukhlaṣ* which means chosen. It means that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is among the chosen servants of Allah who has been appointed to the mission of prophethood to work for the betterment of the creation of Allah. Such people have Allah's own security shield around them so that they would not fall a victim to any evil. The Shayṭān has himself admitted that he cannot touch the chosen servants of Allah. He said: فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَاُغۡوِيَنَّهُمۡ اَجۡمَعِيۡنَ اِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنۡهُمُ الۡمُخۡلَصِيۡنَ That is, by Your honour and power, I shall put all those humans on the wrong track, except Your servants, the ones chosen by You - 15:40.

In some readings (Qira'āt), this word has appeared as: مُخۡلِصِيۡنَ (*mukhliṣīn*) as well. Mukhliṣ means a person who obeys and worships Allah with Ikhlāṣ (for which there is no word in English. The nearest is sincerity which must be genuine, unalloyed, pure and totally honest). Ikhlāṣ means that, in this obedience to Allah and in this worship of Him, there should be no intrusion of worldly or personal desires, interests, love of recognition and office and things like that. If so, the verse would mean: Whoever is *mukhliṣ* (absolutely sincere) in his 'Amal (deed) and 'Ibādah (worship), Allah Ta'ālā will help him in remaining safe from sins.

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has chosen to use two words: سُوۡٓءَ (*sū'*) and: فَحۡشَآء (*faḥshā'*). Literally, *sū'* means evil and it refers to minor (*saghīrah*) sins. And *faḥshā'* means lewdness or immodesty and refers to major (*kabīrah*) sins. This tells us that Allah Ta'ālā kept Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام protected from both kinds of sins, *saghīrah* and *kabīrah*.

Also clarified here is that the '*hamm*' or thought attributed to Sayyid-

nā Yūsuf ﷺ in the Qur'ān was simply a *'hamm'* or thought at the level of non-voluntary scruple, which is included neither under Kabīrah sin, nor under Saghīrah - in fact, is excused.

Verses 25 - 29

وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيْصَهٗ مِنْ دُبُرٍ وَّاَلْفَيَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَا الْبَابِ ط
قَالَتْ مَا جَزَآءُ مَنْ اَرَادَ بِاَهْلِكَ سُوْٓءًا اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّسْجَنَ اَوْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ
﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَ هِيَ رَاوَدَتْنِيْ عَنْ نَّفْسِيْ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ اَهْلِهَا ج اِنْ كَانَ
قَمِيْصُهٗ قُدَّ مِنْ قُبُلٍ فَصَدَقَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاِنْ كَانَ
قَمِيْصُهٗ قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاٰ قَمِيْصَهٗ
قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ قَالَ اِنَّهٗ مِنْ كَيْدِكُنَّ ط اِنَّ كَيْدَكُنَّ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ يُوْسُفُ
اَعْرِضْ عَنْ هٰذَا سكتہ وَاسْتَغْفِرِيْ لِذَنْۢبِكِ ج اِنَّكِ كُنْتِ مِنَ الْخٰطِـِٕيْنَ
ع ﴿٢٩﴾

And they raced towards the door, and she tore his shirt from behind, and they found her master by the door. She said, "What can be the punishment of the one who intended evil with your wife except that he be imprisoned or (given) a painful chastisement?" [25] **He said, "It was she who sought to seduce me." And a witness from her family observed that if his shirt was torn up from the frontside, then she is true and he is a liar;** [26] **and if his shirt was torn up from behind, then she is telling a lie and he is truthful.** [27]

So, when he saw his shirt torn up from behind, he said, "This is certainly a guile of yours, O women. Great is the guile of you women indeed. [28] **O Yūsuf, ignore this matter, and you (O woman) seek forgiveness for your sin. Surely, you were of the sinners."** [29]

Commentary

Described in the previous verses was the time when the wife of the Azīz of Miṣr was busy enticing Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ into sin, and he, on his part, was trying to stay away from it. But, there was the natural

struggle with that non-voluntary thought too. So, to help his honourable prophet, Allah Taʻālā showed a miracle, made something appear before him which drove even that thought out from his heart - whether that 'thing' be the face of his father, Sayyidnā Yaʻqūb عليه السلام, or some verse out of the Divine revelation.

Told in the present verse (25) is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, once he saw this 'proof from his Lord,' ran away from that private enclave and dashed for the door to get out from there. The wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr ran after him to hold him back and, by grabbing his shirt, she tried to stop him from getting out. But, when he did not stop - being determined not to - the shirt was torn from behind him. However, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did come out of the door, and so did Zulaikhā behind him. Historical accounts mention that the door was locked from the inside. When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام ran and reached the door, this lock opened up by itself and dropped down.

When they both came out of the door, they saw the 'Azīz of Miṣr standing face to face. His wife was unnerved. In order to wriggle out of the awkward situation, and to put the blame on Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, she said: What can be the punishment of the one who intended evil with your wife except that he be imprisoned, or (given) a painful chastisement?

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, because of his prophetic gentleness, may not have, perhaps, disclosed her secret. But, when she took the first step and presented a charge sheet of false accusation against him, he was compelled to tell the truth: هِيَ رَاوَدَتْنِي عَنْ نَّفْسِي (It was she who sought to seduce me).

The matter was dense and delicate. For the 'Azīz of Miṣr, it was difficult to decide as to who should be taken as being true. That was no occasion for evidence and proof. But, Allah, great is whose majesty, has His own ways of saving His honourable servants from sin and keeping them unaffected and protected from it. He would do the same for them during their worldly life when He would arrange to save them from being disgraced, even if it would take a miracle to do that. Usually, on such occasions, infant children have been chosen to unfold truth, infants who are not expected to talk customarily. But, by giving them power of speech mi-

raculously, Allah Ta'ālā would arrange for the acquittal of His favoured servants from accusations levelled against them. This happened when people started accusing Sayyidah Maryam falsely. Allah Ta'ālā gave a day old infant, Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ, the ability to speak and it was through his tongue that He had the sanctity of his blessed mother manifested - a very special manifestation of His power indeed. Similarly, when another accusation of this nature was made under the umbrella of a major conspiracy against Jurayj, a pious elder among the Banī Isrā'īl, it was a new-born child who testified to his innocence. When Pharaoh got suspicious about Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ, the small daughter of the personal lady hair-styler of the wife of the Pharaoh was given the power of speech and it was she who saved Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ during his childhood from being hurt by the Pharaoh.

Similarly, in this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, according to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Abū Hurairah ؓ, Allah Ta'ālā bestowed that power of speech upon a small child - and that too in one of the finest ways of wisdom. This small child was lying in a cradle in this house. There was no way it could have occured to anyone that this child would have watched their movements and understood what they were doing - and then, would be able to even go on to describe it in some manner. But, Allah is absolutely powerful. When He decides to highlight the greatness of those who strive in the mission of their obedience to Him, He is quite capable of demonstrating before the whole world that every particle of this universe works as His secret service which knows every criminal inside out and keeps a record of his or her crime and when the time comes, it speaks out the truth. Think of the Resurrection, the awesome plain of the Ḥashr when, at the time of the accounting of deeds, human beings will, goaded by their old worldly habit, refuse to admit their crimes, then, their very hands and feet and skins and surroundings will be called upon to stand as witnesses against them. Each such witness shall lay each and everything done by them bare before the unimaginably huge multitude gathered together on that fateful day of Al-Maḥshar. That would be the time when human beings will find out that their hands and feet and the walls and doors of their homes inside, and the security arrangement outside these, none of them, not even one, were their own. In fact, all of them were secret agents of Al-

lah, the Rabb of all Power.

In sum, this small child, who was lying in the cradle oblivious of everything in the world around him, was made to speak out - as a miracle of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ - precisely at the time when the 'Azīz of Miṣr, being on the horns of a dilemma, did not know what to do.

Furthermore, if this child could have only said that Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ is free of any blame and it is Zulaikhā who is at fault, then, even that much would have been no less than a miracle, and a formidable proof of the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ. But, Allah Ta'ālā had this child say something farsighted which would separate truth from falsehood decisively. What the child said was: See the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ. If it is torn up from the front, then the word of Zulaikhā is true and that of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ could be otherwise. And if the shirt is torn up from the back, then there remains just no other probability but that Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was running away from her and Zulaikhā wanted to stop him.

Apart from being a miracle of speech manifested by a child, this was something which could be understood by everyone around on its own. So, when the direction was followed, it was observed that the shirt was torn up from the back. Thus, the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ stood proved openly from physical signs as well.

The explanation of the *'shāhid'* or witness of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ given here - that he was a small child blessed with the power of speech as a miracle - stands proved from a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This Ḥadīth has been reported by Imām Aḥmad in his Musnad, Ibn Ḥibbān in his Ṣaḥīḥ and Ḥākim in Mustadrak. They have rated this Ḥadīth as Ṣaḥīḥ (sound). In this Ḥadīth, it is said: 'Allah Ta'ālā has blessed four children the power of speech while still in their cradle.' These four are the same as mentioned earlier. (Maẓharī) However, in some narrations, other explanations of *'shāhid'* or witness have also been reported. But, Tafsīr authorities such as Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr and others have declared the first Tafsīr to be the weightier one.

Injunctions and Rulings

The following rules and guiding principles have been deduced from the verses cited above:

1. From verse 25 begining with the words: وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ (And they raced towards the door ...), we learn that a place where there is a danger of getting involved in sin must be abandoned outright - as was practically demonstrated by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام by running away from there.

2. In matters requiring obedience to Divine injunctions, one should not, to the best of one's ability, let his efforts in that direction taper off - even if a tangible result from them does not seem to be coming out. Results rest in the hands of Allah Ta'ālā. One's job is to channel and devote his or her effort and ability in the way of Allah - and proving one's identity as a servant of Allah is the purpose. This is what was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. All doors were closed, even locked, as reported in historical narrations. Yet, he spent out his maximum strength in running towards the door. In a situation like that, help and support from Allah *jalla thana'uh* is witnessed frequently when a servant of Allah has done his best, it transpires that He would also arrange the causes for His servant to succeed. However, should the situation be otherwise and one fails to achieve formal success as we know it, then, for a devoted servant of Allah, even this failure is no less than success (for this is the preference of his Lord).

It is said about a righteous elder confined to prison that he would, on every Friday take his bath, wash his clothes, get ready for Jumu'ah prayer, walk upto the door of the prison, and once there, he would say: '*Yā* Allah, this much was what was within my power. What is beyond that is in Your control.' Who knows, given the limitless mercy of Allah Ta'ālā, his spiritual yearning would have caused the prison gate to open with the command of Allah and he would have been enabled to perform the Ṣalāh of Jumu'ah. But, Allah, in His wisdom, bestowed upon this righteous devotee such high spiritual station as would pale out a thousand workings of the supernatural (*karāmah*). The gate of the prison did not open because of his continuous effort to offer his Ṣalāh of Jumu'ah. But, he did not lose heart. He kept doing the same thing every Jumu'ah. This is spiritual fortitude called by Ṣūfī masters as superior to Karamah.

3. It stands proved (from verse 26) that, should a person be accused falsely by someone, speaking out in defence is the way of the prophets (the Sunnah of the Anbiyā'). Remaining silent at that time, and letting oneself be declared to be a criminal, is no act of piety or trust in Allah

(*tawakkul*).

4. The fourth problem concerns the word: شاهد (*shāhid*) (in verse 26). When this word is used in common juristic matters and cases, it denotes a person who relates an event as seen by him in a disputed case. In this verse, the person who has been referred to by the word, '*shāhid*,' has not related any event, or any personal observation about it - instead of that, what has been hinted at is a sort of device to arrive at a decision. Technically, that could not be called a '*shāhid*' or witness.

But, it is obvious that all these terms have been employed by later scholars and jurists for the convenience of understanding and teaching. They are neither the terms of the Holy Qur'ān, nor is it bound by them. The Holy Qur'ān has called this person a '*shāhid*' (witness) in the sense that the way the statement of a 'witness makes it easy for a judge to arrive at a decision, and proves that one of the parties in the case is in the right, the same benefit became available through the statement of this child. Initially, his miraculous speech itself was sufficient proof to absolve Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the blame. Then, there were the signs given by him. In the ultimate analysis, they too are nothing but the proof of the absolvement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the blame. Therefore, saying that he appeared as a witness in favour of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام will be correct - though, he did not declare Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to be true, rather, had mentioned both probabilities. And, in addition to that, he had even supposedly taken Zulaikhā to be true in a situation in which the likelihood of her being true was not certain - in fact, there existed the other probability too, because the possibility of the shirt being torn from the front existed in both situations. And then, he had admitted the truthfulness of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام only in a situation wherein there could have been no other probability other than this. But, finally, the outcome of this strategy was but to prove the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

5. In arriving at judgements of disputed cases, circumstancial evidence can be taken into consideration - as was demonstrated here when this '*shāhid*' declared that the shirt torn from the backside was an evidence that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was running and Zulaikhā was trying to stop him. In this matter, there is an agreement of all jurists that signs and indicators should definitely be used to determine the truth, as was

done here. But, besides that, only signs and indicators cannot be given the status of sufficient proof. In this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷤ too, that which really proves the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷤ is the miraculous speech of the child. As for the signs and indicators which have been mentioned there, they serve to confirm the matter.

In the last two (28 & 29) of the verses cited above, it has been stated that the 'Azīz of Miṣr had already realized by having heard the child speak in the manner he did that some special supernatural situation was there to demonstrate the innocence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷤. After that, according to what the child had said, when he saw that the very shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷤ is really torn up from the back, he became certain that it was Zulaikhā who was at fault and it was Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷤ who was innocent. So, first he addressed Zulaikhā and said: 'إِنَّهُ مِنْ كَيْدِكُنَّ that is, all this is a guile of yours whereby you wish to pass on your wrongdoing to someone else. Then he said that great is the guile of women for it is difficult to understand and not easy to get out from. The reason is that they outwardly give the impression of being soft, delicate, even weak. A non-discerning onlooker is likely to believe in what they say. But, given a lack of wisdom and honesty, that could be a web of deception. (Maẓharī)

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ appearing in the Tafsīr of Al-Qurṭubī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: The guile of women is stronger than the guile of Shayṭān - because, about the guile of the Shayṭān, Allah Ta'ālā has said that it is weak: إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيْفًا (4:76); and about the guile of women, it was said: إِنَّ كَيْدَكُنَّ عَظِيْمٌ (great is the guile of you women - 12:28). And it is obvious that not all women are meant here. Instead, meant here are only those of them who are involved in practicing guiles and excuses. So, after having pointed out to Zulaikhā her error, the 'Azīz of Miṣr said to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷤: يُوْسُفُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هٰذَا :'O Yūsuf, ignore this matter' - that is, do not speak about it before others so there be no disgrace because of this. Then he addressed Zulaikhā and said: وَاسْتَغْفِرِيْ لِذَنْۢبِكِ إِنَّكِ كُنْتِ مِنَ الْخٰطِئِيْنَ (and you [O woman] seek forgiveness for your sin. Surely, you were of the sinners). This obviously means that she should seek forgiveness from her husband. And it could also mean that she should seek forgiveness from Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷤ for it was she who made the error and put the blame on

him.

Special Note

At this point, it is very surprising that a husband, who finds out an open proof of such immodesty and breach of trust on the part of his wife, would not be agitated, rather, go on talking with perfect peace of mind - unusual indeed, given the compulsion of human nature in such circumstances. Imām Al-Qurṭubī has said that one of the reasons for this may be that the 'Azīz of Miṣr was someone lacking that kind of a sense of shame. And it is also possible that the way Allah Ta'ālā supernaturally arranged to save Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ first from sin and then from disgrace - in the same way, it was also a part of this arrangement that He did not let the 'Azīz of Miṣr become all agitated in anger. Otherwise, as customary, this would have been an occasion where one is likely to go to physical assault without bothering to investigate first, not to say much about verbal aggression, which would be rather elementary. If the 'Azīz of Miṣr, affected by common human response, were to be enraged, it is possible that he might have committed something, physically or verbally, something which would have been against the august status of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ. These are the wonders of Divine Power which openly prove how those who stand steadfast in obedience to their most true Lord are protected at every step they take in His way. And the honour of creating what is there at its best goes only to Allah.

In the verses which will follow, mentioned there is another event which is connected with the story narrated earlier. There it has been said that this event, despite the effort to keep it concealed, spread around among women in the families of the courtiers. These women started blaming the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr. Some commentators have said that these were five women, all wives of officials close to the "Azīz of Miṣr. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

These women were talking among themselves. They were saying: Look, how regretable it is that the wife of the 'Azīz of Miṣr, despite enjoying a status so high, had become enamoured with her young slave and was looking for the fulfillment of what she wanted from him. In this, we think, she is in a grave error. The word used in the verse (30) is: فَتٰهَا (*fatā-hā*: translated as 'her youthful slave'). Fatā' denotes someone youthful. In customary usage, a boy slave when small is called a *ghulām*. If in his

youth, the boy is called *fatā*, and the girl, *fatāh*. Here, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been referred to as the slave of Zulaikhā either because that which is owned by the husband is also customarily called as that which is owned by the wife; and/or because Zulaikhā had taken Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from her husband as gift. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 30 - 35

وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِي الْمَدِيْنَةِ امْرَاَتُ الْعَزِيْزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتٰهَا عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ج قَدْ
شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا ط اِنَّا لَنَرٰىهَا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ
اَرْسَلَتْ اِلَيْهِنَّ وَاَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكَاً وَّاٰتَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّيْنًا
وَّقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ ج فَلَمَّا رَاَيْنَهٗۤ اَكْبَرْنَهٗ وَقَطَّعْنَ اَيْدِيَهُنَّ ز وَقُلْنَ
حَاشَ لِلّٰهِ مَا هٰذَا بَشَرًا ط اِنْ هٰذَاۤ اِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالَتْ فَذٰلِكُنَّ
الَّذِيْ لُمْتُنَّنِيْ فِيْهِ ط وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُّهٗ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ ط وَلَئِنْ لَّمْ
يَفْعَلْ مَاۤ اٰمُرُهٗ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَلَيَكُوْنًا مِّنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ
السِّجْنُ اَحَبُّ اِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُوْنَنِيْۤ اِلَيْهِ ج وَاِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّيْ كَيْدَهُنَّ
اَصْبُ اِلَيْهِنَّ وَاَكُنْ مِّنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهٗ رَبُّهٗ فَصَرَفَ
عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ ط اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٣٤﴾ ثُمَّ بَدَا لَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا
رَاَوُا الْاٰيٰتِ لَيَسْجُنُنَّهٗ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٣٥﴾ ع

And women in the city said, "The wife of the governor is seducing her youthful slave. The love for him has arrested her. Surely, we see her in open error." [30] **So, when she heard of their crafty comments, she extended an invitation to them and arranged for them a comfortable place (to sit and dine) and gave everyone a knife and said (to Yūsuf): "come in before them." So when they saw him, they found him great and (were so bewildered that they) cut their hands and said, "Oh God! He is no human being. He is but a noble angel.'** [31] **She said, "This is he you blamed me for. Yes, I seduced him, but he abstained. And should he not follow my command, he shall be imprisoned and will be disgraced."** [32] **He said,**

"My Lord, the prison is dearer to me than what these women invite me to. And unless You do not turn their guile away from me, I shall get inclined towards them and shall be among the ignorant." [33] **So, his Lord accepted his prayer and turned their guile away from him. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.** [34] **Later on, even after having seen the signs, they deemed it proper to imprison him for a time.** [35]

Commentary

Having explained the linkage of verse before the beginning of the present verses, we can now turn to the explanation of individual verses.

Said in verse 32 was: فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ اَرْسَلَتْ اِلَيْهِنَّ (So, when she heard of their crafty comments, she extended an invitation to them).

Here, Zulaikhā refers to the talking of women as their '*makr*' or craftiness - though they had obviously planned no trick against her. But, since they spoke ill about her secretly, it was identified as '*makr*.' As for the expression: وَاَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكَاً which follows immediately and has been translated as 'and arranged for them a comfortable place' is inclusive of the comfort of special pillows for hand and back rest placed there for relaxation.

Then, it was said: وَاٰتَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِّنْهُنَّ سِكِّيْنًا (and gave everyone a knife). It means when these women came in and sat down, different foods and fruits were served, some of which needed a knife to peel and cut, therefore, also given to each one of them was a sharp knife. The obvious purpose of this was to cut fruits. But, concealed in her heart was what comes next - that is, these women will lose their senses at the sight of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and would go on to cut their hands with the knife.

After having made all these arrangements, to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, who was in some other quarter of the house, Zulaikhā said: وَقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ (come in before them). Since, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was not aware of her vain intention, he came out into this sitting.

That which happened then has been described in:

فَلَمَّا رَاَيْنَهٗٓ اَكْبَرْنَهٗ وَقَطَّعْنَ اَيْدِيَهُنَّ وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلّٰهِ مَا هٰذَا بَشَرًا ؕ اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيْمٌ

'So, when they saw him, they found him great and [were so

> bewildered that they] cut their hands [that is, when cutting their fruit, they saw this object of wonder, the knife unconsciously ran over their hand - as it occasionally happens when one's thought is diverted to something else] and said, 'Oh God! He is no human being. He is but a noble angel.' [by which they meant that one exuding such light can only be an angel].'

Then, in verse 32, it was said:

قَالَتْ فَذٰلِكُنَّ الَّذِىْ لُمْتُنَّنِىْ فِيْهِ ؕ وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُّهٗ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ ؕ وَلَئِنْ لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَآ اٰمُرُهٗ لَيُسْجَنَنَّ وَلَيَكُوْنًا مِّنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ

> 'She [Zulaikhā] said: 'So, [see] this is the one you blamed me for. Yes, I seduced him, but he abstained. And should he [in future] not follow my command, he shall be [surely] imprisoned and shall be disgraced [too].'

When Zulaikhā realized that her secret lay disclosed before those women anyway, she started threatening Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷷ right before them. At that time, according to some commentators, all these women too started telling Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷷ that Zulaikhā was their benefactor, therefore, he should not oppose her.

And some words of the Holy Qur'ān which appear later (33) also support it, for example: يَدْعُوْنَنِىْ (*yad'ūnanī*: these women invite me) and: كَيْدَهُنَّ (*kaidahunna*: their guile) where the statement of some women has been mentioned in the plural form.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷷ saw that these women were also supporting Zulaikhā and there remained no other visible way to stay safe against their guile, he turned to his ultimate resort, to Allah *jalla thana'uh,* and before Him, he said:

رَبِّ السِّجْنُ اَحَبُّ اِلَىَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُوْنَنِىْٓ اِلَيْهِ ۚ وَاِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّىْ كَيْدَهُنَّ اَصْبُ اِلَيْهِنَّ وَاَكُنْ مِّنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ

> My Lord, the prison is dearer to me than what these women invite me to. And unless You turn their guile away from me, I shall get inclined towards them and shall be among the ignorant.

Here, the statement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷷ that 'the prison is dearer to me' does not reflect any desire or wish to be detained in a prison, instead of that, it is an expression which shows that he would find it easier

to face this temporal hardship as compared to that of falling in sin. According to some narrations, when Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was confined to the prison, a revelation from Allah Ta'ālā told him: You have put yourself into the prison by what you yourself had said: السِّجْنُ اَحَبُّ اِلَیَّ (the prison is dearer to me) and had you asked for well-being (*'āfiyah*), you would have been blessed with perfect well-being. From here we come to know that, to stay safe from a major hardship, saying in prayer that one better be subjected to some minor hardship in lieu of it is not appropriate. Instead of doing that, one should, when under the threat of any hardship, problem or distress, pray to Allah Ta'ālā for nothing but *'āfiyah* (well-being). Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ prohibited a man from praying for *ṣabr* (patience) saying that *ṣabr* is done when one faces distress and hardship. So, rather praying to Allah for *ṣabr*, pray for *'āfiyah*. (Tirmidhī) The uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidnā 'Abbās ؓ asked him: Teach me a prayer I should make. He said: Pray for *'āfiyah* (well-being) from your Rabb. Sayyidnā 'Abbās ؓ says when he, after a period of time, once again asked him to be advised of some *du'ā'* he should be making, he said: Pray to Allah Ta'ālā for *'āfiyah* in *dunyā* and *'ākhirah*. (Maẓharī from Ṭabarānī)

As for the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ: 'And unless you do not turn their guile away from me, I shall get inclined towards them,' this is not contrary to the concept of the 'Iṣmah of prophethood (a prophet's state of being Divinely protected from sin) - because the very outcome of 'Ismah is that Allah Ta'ālā would, by arranging to keep a person safe from sin as a creational imperative, protect him from falling into it. Though Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ had this desired cover by virtue of his being a prophet, yet he was compelled to make this du'ā' because of the great awe he had for Him in his heart. This also tells us that no one can, without the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā, stay safe from sin. And it also makes it clear that every act of sin is caused by ignorance (*jahālah*), the opposite of which is knowledge (*'ilm*), and 'Ilm (knowledge) demands abstention from sins. (Qurṭubī)

After that, said in verse 34 was:

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهٗ رَبُّهٗ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ ۗ اِنَّهٗ هُوَالسَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ

So, his Lord accepted his prayer and turned their guile away

from him. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

To protect him from the guile of these women, Allah Taʿālā made his own wise arrangements. Though the ʿAzīz of Miṣr and his inner circle was already convinced of the great spiritual qualities of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, his piety, fear of Allah and chastity, but rumours of the incident had started circulating in the city. To put a check on this, they found it expedient to confine Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into the prison for a certain period of time so that there remains no source of any doubt in the concerned family, and that the talk of the town too dies out in due course. So, said at the end of the verse (35) was:

ثُمَّ بَدَا لَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا رَاَوُا الْاٰيٰتِ لَيَسْجُنُنَّهٗ حَتّٰى حِيْنٍ

Later on, even after having seen the signs, they [the ʿAzīz of Miṣr and his advisers] deemed it proper [or expedient] to imprison him for a time.

Thus, to the prison he was sent.

Verses 36 - 42

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيٰنِ ۭ قَالَ اَحَدُهُمَآ اِنِّيْٓ اَرٰىنِيْٓ اَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا ۚ
وَقَالَ الْاٰخَرُ اِنِّيْٓ اَرٰىنِيْٓ اَحْمِلُ فَوْقَ رَاْسِيْ خُبْزًا تَاْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ ۭ
نَبِّئْنَا بِتَاْوِيْلِهٖ ۚ اِنَّا نَرٰىكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ قَالَ لَا يَاْتِيْكُمَا طَعَامٌ
تُرْزَقٰنِهٖٓ اِلَّا نَبَّاْتُكُمَا بِتَاْوِيْلِهٖ قَبْلَ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَكُمَا ۭ ذٰلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِيْ رَبِّيْ ۭ
اِنِّيْ تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾
وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ اٰبَاۗءِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ ۭ مَا كَانَ لَنَآ اَنْ نُّشْرِكَ
بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۭ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ
النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ يٰصَاحِبَيِ السِّجْنِ ءَاَرْبَابٌ مُّتَفَرِّقُوْنَ خَيْرٌ اَمِ
اللّٰهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿٣٩﴾ مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَسْمَاۗءً سَمَّيْتُمُوْهَآ
اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَاۗؤُكُمْ مَّآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ۭ اِنِ الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ۭ اَمَرَ

اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِيَّاهُ ط ذٰلِكَ الدِّيْنُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ
﴿٤٠﴾ يٰصَاحِبَيِ السِّجْنِ اَمَّآ اَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسْقِيْ رَبَّهٗ خَمْرًا ج وَاَمَّا الْاٰخَرُ
فَيُصْلَبُ فَتَاْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْ رَّاْسِهٖ ط قُضِيَ الْاَمْرُ الَّذِيْ فِيْهِ تَسْتَفْتِيٰنِ
﴿٤١﴾ ط وَقَالَ لِلَّذِيْ ظَنَّ اَنَّهٗ نَاجٍ مِّنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِيْ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ز فَاَنْسٰىهُ
الشَّيْطٰنُ ذِكْرَ رَبِّهٖ فَلَبِثَ فِي السِّجْنِ بِضْعَ سِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ ط ع

And two men entered the prison with him. One of them said, "I have seen myself (in dream) pressing wine." And the other said, "I have seen myself carrying bread on my head of which the birds are eating. Let us know its interpretation. We see you are a man of good deeds." [36]

He said, "No food provided for you shall come to you, but I can give you its description before it comes to you. This is the knowledge my Lord has given me. I have abandoned the way of those who do not believe in Allah, and who are deniers of the Hereafter, [37] **and I have followed the way of my fathers, Ibrāhīm, Isḥāq and Ya'qūb. It is not for us that we associate any partners with Allah. All this is of the favour of Allah upon us and upon the people, but most of the people are not grateful.** [38] **O my fellow prisoners, are different gods better or Allah, the One, the All-Dominant?** [39] **Whatever you worship, other than Him, are nothing but names you have coined, you and your fathers. Allah has sent down no authority for them. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. He has ordained that you shall not worship anyone but Him. This is the only right path. But most of the people do not know."** [40]

O my fellow prisoners, one of you will serve wine to his master, while the other will be crucified and birds will eat from his head. Destined is the matter you are asking about." [41]

And he (Yūsuf) said to the one whom he believed likely to be released out of the two, "Mention me before your master.' Then, the Satan made him forget to mention him to his master. So, he (Yūsuf) remained in prison for a few years. [42]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses cited above is a supplementary event relating to the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. It has been repeatedly stressed that the Holy Qur'ān is no book of history, or of stories and tales. When a story or historical event is mentioned in it, the sole objective is to provide some lesson, good counsel or crucial guidance on various facets of human life. In the entire Qur'ān and throughout the events relating to many prophets, it is the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام alone which has been described by the Qur'ān continuously - otherwise, it has considered it sufficient to mention some necessary part of an historical event wherever appropriate.

If you would look at the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the beginning to the end, there are hundreds of lessons to learn, good advices to heed to and important elements of guidance to follow during various stages of human life. This supplementary story too has its graces of guidance in abundance.

The event as it took shape was that, despite the complete absolvement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the blame, and the strong establishment of his moral integrity, it was to put an end to the disgrace of people talking about them that the 'Azīz of Miṣr and his wife decided to send Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to the prison for some time - which, in reality, was the fulfillment of the *du'a'* and wish of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, because, for him, it had become extremely difficult to defend his chastity while living in the home of the 'Azīz of Miṣr.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام arrived at the prison, two other sentenced criminals were also admitted there. One of them was the cup-bearer of the king while the other was a cook. Citing major Tafsīr authorities, Ibn Kathīr has written that these two were arrested on the charge that they had tried to poison the king through food or drink. The case was under investigation, therefore, they were kept in prison.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام came into the prison, it was because of his prophetic morals, mercy and affection that he used to show concern about all of his fellow inmates and took care of them whenever needed. If anyone became sick, he would call on him and do whatever had to be done for him. For anyone he found sad or distressed, he would have ap-

propriate words of comfort. To lift his spirits, he would gently tell him to observe patience and made the hope of freedom come alive into his heart. He would think of bringing comfort to others at the cost of his own discomfort. For whole nights he would remain engaged in the 'Ibādah (worship) of Allah Ta'ālā. Seeing his endearing ways, all inmates of the prison became convinced of his high spiritual status. Even the officer-in-charge of the prison was impressed. He said: Had it been in my power, I would have let you go. Now, this much I can do that you will face no inconvenience here.

Some Notes to Wonder About

When the officer-in-charge of the prison, or some of the inmates, told Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that they loved him very much, he said: For God's sake, do not love me - because whenever I have been loved by anyone, I have suffered one way or the other. When I was a child, my paternal aunt loved me. As a result, I was blamed for theft. Then, my father loved me. This made me do a term of detention in a well at the hands of my brothers, then came slavery and expulsion from home country. When the wife of the 'Azīz loved me, I landed into this prison. (Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī)

These two prisoners who went to the prison alongwith Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said to him one day that they thought he was a man of piety and good deeds, therefore, they would like to ask him to give an interpretation of their dream. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه and some other leading authorities in Tafsīr have said that they had really seen these dreams. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه has said that there was no dream. They had simply made it up to test the spiritual excellence and veracity of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

However, one of them, that is, the royal cup-bearer, said: 'I have seen myself (in dream) pressing wine,' and the other, that is, the cook, said: 'I have seen myself carrying bread on my head of which the birds are eating.' Then, they requested him to interpret the dreams for them.

Here, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has been requested to interpret the dreams. But he, before answering this question, and following his intrinsic prophetic way, begins with the task of Tablīgh and invitation to believe and have faith. And by following the principle of Da'wah and by acting wisely, he first tried to create in their hearts a base of confidence in

him. To achieve this, he talked about his particular miracle through which he tells them about the food which they receive from their homes, or from somewhere else, and much before it arrives, he is able to tell them the kind, the taste, the quantity and the time of arrival of the food - and that the food turns out to be exactly as predicted: ذٰلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِي رَبِّي (This is of the knowledge my Lord has given me). He is saying that this has nothing to do with the art of divination through computation of figures and lines (*'ilm al-jafr* and *'ilm al-raml* - not Jafar and Ramal, soothsaying or any other occult act of conjuring). Instead of all that, this is what my Rabb tells me - and I pass on the information. And this was an open miracle which is proof positive of prophethood and a major cause of confidence. After that, he declares his abhorence for disbelief and his disengagement from the community of disbelievers. Then, with it, he also stresses that he is a member of the House of Prophets and it is their Community that he adheres to and that he is a scion of the House of Ibrāhīm, Isḥāq and Ya'qūb عليهم السلام. We mentioned confidence a little earlier. Customarily, this kind of inherited nobility, a common family trait, is also a source of creating confidence in a person. After that he said: And it is not for us that we associate any partners with Allah. Then, he said that the Taufīq of following a true religion ('the favour of Allah upon us and upon all people') was nothing but the Faḍl or grace of Allah Ta'ālā, for it was He who, by giving proper understanding, made the acceptance of truth easy on us. But, most of the people do not appreciate this blessing and do not show their gratitude for it. After having said that, he asked the same prisoners to tell him if it was better that human beings should be worshiping many gods, or was it better that one becomes a servant of one Allah alone - whose subduing power is all-dominant. Then he referred to idol worship from a different angle. He told them that their fathers and forefathers have taken some idols as their Lord. As for them, they are no more than a lot of names which they have coined on their own. They have no personal attributes which could become deserving of assigning to them the least fund of power - because all of them are inert. This is something one can see with one's own eyes. The only other method through which they could have been taken as true objects of worship would be that Allah Ta'ālā sends down specific injunctions or commandments to worship them. So, in that case, even if observation and reason had not been willing to accept their godhood but, because of the Divine

command, we would have left our observation and reason aside and would have obeyed the command of Allah. But, this is not there either - because Allah Taʿālā did not send down any argument or proof for their worship. Instead of that, what He said was but that Law and Sovereignty belonged to Allah Taʿālā with no one having a right in it; and the command He gave was no other but that we should not worship anyone or anything other than Allah. Finally, he said: 'This is the only right path - which was bestowed on my forefathers by Allah Taʿālā, but most of the people do not know this reality.'

After having made his call to truth, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام turned to the dreams mentioned by two of his prison mates declaring that one of the two of them will get his release, return to his job and keep serving wine to his master. As for the other, the crime against him will stand proved and he will be crucified and birds will eat from his head.

An Example of Prophetic Compassion

Ibn Kathīr has said: Though the dreams of both these prisoners were separate, and fixed was the interpretation of each, and also fixed was the fate that the royal cup-bearer will be acquitted and return to his job and the cook will be crucified. But, because of his prophetic compassion and clemency, he did not specifically mention as to who among the two will be hanged so that the person concerned may be spared from becoming obsessed by the very thought of it right from that time. Instead of that, he made a general statement saying that one of them will be released and the other will be crucified.

At the end, he told them that the interpretation of their dreams given by him was not arrived at by conjecture. It was Divine decree which cannot be averted. Commentators who have called the dreams described by these people as false and made-up, they have also said: When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام interpreted their dreams, they came up with the remark that they had just not seen any dream. They had simply made it up. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: قُضِيَ الْاَمْرُ الَّذِىْ فِيْهِ تَسْتَفْتِيٰنِ (Destined is the matter you are asking about). In other words, it would mean: Whether you saw this dream, or did not, now the event will come to be as described - the purpose of which is that this is the punishment of the sin, of making up a false dream, committed by you, a punishment which has been identified in the interpretation of the dream.

After that, to the person about whom Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ had gathered from the interpretation of his dream that he would be released, he said: When you are released from the prison, mention me before your master as the innocent person who is still languishing in the prison. But, once released, this person forgot about this message of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, as a result of which, his freedom was further delayed and he had to stay in prison for a few more years. The word used in the Qur'ān is: بِضْعَ سِنِيْنَ (*biḍ'a sinīn*: a few years). This word holds good for a figure between three to nine. Some commentators have said that he had to live in the prison for a period of seven more years.

Injunctions and Rulings

Worth pondering on are many Aḥkām, Masā'il, useful lessons and elements of guidance that emerge from the verses under reference. They are as given below:

1. Consider the confinement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ into a prison which is the notorious turf of criminals and bad characters. But, he treated them too with his characteristic good morals and social graces, as a result of which, all of them became enamoured with him. This tells us that it is the duty of reformers that they should, by dealing with sinners and criminals with compassion and concern, bring them closer, let them become familiar, connected, and reliant on them. Also necessary is that they should not betray any attitude of hatred or distaste for them at any step.

2. From the statement: إِنَّا نَرٰىكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ (We see you are a man of good deeds), we find out that the interpretation of a dream should be sought particularly from persons one trusts in as righteous, good in deeds and sympathetic.

3. The third thing we learn here is about the ideal conduct of those who carry the *da'wah* of truth and serve people by working for their moral and social betterment. In this connection, their first duty is to bring round people created by Allah to put their trust in them through their good morals and conduct, and their intellectual and practical excellences - whether they have to unfold and express some of those excellences, as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ on this occasion when he not only talked about his miracle but also mentioned his being a member of

the House of Prophets. Such a statement of personal excellence - if it is based on the intention to serve people to become better and not to prove one's personal rank - will not be considered as the 'self-praise' which has been prohibited in the Holy Qur'ān: فَلَا تُزَكُّوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ that is, do not talk about the purity of your own self. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

4. Pointed to here is an important principle of communication and correction (Tablīgh and Irshād). It is the duty of the carrier of a Call (Dā'ī) and reformer (Muṣliḥ) that he should, at all times and under all circumstances, keep his constant mission of Da'wah and Tablīgh come first of all he does. In other words, if someone comes to him for something, he should not forget his real mission - as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام when these prisoners came to him to ask for an interpretation of their dreams. At that time, before answering their request for the interpretation of their dreams, he gave them the gift of right guidance through his Tablīgh and Irshād. Please do not take Da'wah and Tablīgh as something which takes place in a conference, or on a pulpit or stage alone. This job is done far more effectively through personal contacts and private exchanges.

5. Another aspect of this very effort of telling people what is right and seeking their betterment through it (Irshād and Iṣlaḥ) is : Whatever is said in this connection should be said with the strategy of wisdom in a way that it goes into the heart of the addressee. This is how it was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He succeeded in showing to them that the excellences he had were the direct outcome of his disengagement with disbelief and adoption of Islam as his faith. After that he described the drawbacks and shortcomings of Kufr and Shirk in a soft manner which appeals to the heart.

6. Another problem resolved here is about how bad news should be handled. If, that which has to be communicated to an addressee happens to be painful or repugnant, yet it be necessary that it be disclosed, then, it should be presented before the addressee, as far as possible, in a way that it brings the least discomfort to him. This is as it was when the death of one person was destined as interpreted on the basis of his dream, but Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام kept it ambiguous. He did not make it precise and fixed by telling him that he will be the one to be hanged. (Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī)

7. It will be recalled that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had sought his release from the prison when he asked the acquitted prisoner: Mention me before your master. This tells us that making someone a medium of effort in order to get out of some difficulty is not against the principle of Tawakkul (Trust in Allah).

8. Another view of this problem is that Allah Ta'ālā does not like His great prophets making efforts to achieve everything permissible and go on to make a human being the medium of their release. This is so because the absence of any medium between them and Allah Ta'ālā spells out the true identity of prophets. Perhaps, that was why this prisoner forgot about the message given by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which made him stay in the prison for many more years. In a Ḥadīth too, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has pointed out in this direction.

Verses 43 - 50

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ اِنِّيْٓ اَرٰى سَبْعَ بَقَرٰتٍ سِمَانٍ يَّاْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ
وَّسَبْعَ سُنْۢبُلٰتٍ خُضْرٍ وَّاُخَرَ يٰبِسٰتٍ ؕ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الْمَلَاُ اَفْتُوْنِيْ فِيْ رُءْيَايَ
اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لِلرُّءْيَا تَعْبُرُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَضْغَاثُ اَحْلَامٍ ۚ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَاْوِيْلِ
الْاَحْلَامِ بِعٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْ نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ اُمَّةٍ اَنَا
اُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِتَاْوِيْلِهٖ فَاَرْسِلُوْنِ ﴿٤٥﴾ يُوْسُفُ اَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيْقُ اَفْتِنَا فِيْ سَبْعِ
بَقَرٰتٍ سِمَانٍ يَّاْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعٌ عِجَافٌ وَّسَبْعِ سُنْۢبُلٰتٍ خُضْرٍ وَّاُخَرَ
يٰبِسٰتٍ ۙ لَّعَلِّيْٓ اَرْجِعُ اِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالَ تَزْرَعُوْنَ
سَبْعَ سِنِيْنَ دَاَبًا ۚ فَمَا حَصَدْتُّمْ فَذَرُوْهُ فِيْ سُنْۢبُلِهٖٓ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّمَّا
تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ ثُمَّ يَاْتِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ سَبْعٌ شِدَادٌ يَّاْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ
لَهُنَّ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّمَّا تُحْصِنُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ ثُمَّ يَاْتِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ عَامٌ فِيْهِ
يُغَاثُ النَّاسُ وَفِيْهِ يَعْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُوْنِيْ بِهٖ ۚ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُ
الرَّسُوْلُ قَالَ ارْجِعْ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ فَسْئَلْهُ مَا بَالُ النِّسْوَةِ الّٰتِيْ قَطَّعْنَ

أَيْدِيَهُنَّ ۖ إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

And the king said, "I have seen (in a dream) seven fat cows being eaten by seven lean ones, and seven ears of grain which are green and (seven) others which are dry. O people, tell me about my dream, if you do interpret dreams." [43] **They said, "(It seems to be) a mishmash of dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of dreams."** [44]

And said the one who was released out of the two and recalled (Yūsuf) after a long time, "I shall tell you its interpretation. Just send me (to Yūsuf)." [45]

"Yūsuf, O the truthful one, tell us about seven fat cows eaten by seven lean ones, and seven ears of grain which are green and (seven) others which are dry, so that I may go back to the people, that they may know." [46]

He said, "You will grow crops for seven years consecutively. So, what you have harvested, leave it in its ear, except a little which you eat. [47] **Then there shall come after that seven hard years which shall eat up what you have stored for them, except a little which you preserve (to sow).** [48] **Then there shall come after that a year in which people shall have rains and in which they shall extract juices."** [49]

And the king said, "Bring him to me." So, when the messenger came to him, he said, "Go back to your lord and ask him, 'What about the women who cut their hands?' Surely, my Lord knows their guile well." [50]

Commentary

After that, say the verses cited above, Allah Taʿālā created through the workings of what is unseen (Al-Ghayb), a particular way out for the release of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. This made the king of Egypt see a dream which caused him great anxiety. He assembled the known dream interpretors and soothsayers of his state and asked them to interpret his dream. None of them could understand the dream. The answer they all gave was: أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ ۖ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَالِمِينَ : '(It seems to be) a mishmash of dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of dreams.' The word: أَضْغَاث (*aḍghāth*) is the plural form of: ضِغْث (*ḍighth*) which literally refers to a bundle of chaff or husk separated from grain while threshing and is a collection of different kinds of waste material. The sense of their say-

ing was that this dream was somewhat muddled, confused and an admixture of many thoughts and things, and they did not know how to interpret such dreams. Had it been a regular dream, they would have had interpreted it.

While watching the proceedings of this event, that released prisoner recollected the message given by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, though after the passage of a long time in between. He stepped forward and said that he may be able to tell him the interpretation of this dream. At that time, by mentioning the spiritual excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, his expertise in dream interpretation, and his detention in the prison despite his innocence, he submitted that he be allowed to meet him in the prison. The king arranged that for him. He came to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. To describe this entire episode, the Holy Qur'ān has used only one word: فَأَرْسِلُونِ (*fa arsilūnī*).

It means: Just send me (to Yūsuf). Things like the introduction of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the official permission to see him and then the final arrival in the prison are parts of the event which can be understood contextually. Therefore, they were not described specifically, instead, the story was initiated as follows.

This begins with the address: يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُ (Yūsuf, O the truthful one ...) in verse 46. It means that this person reached the prison and described his intent in a manner that he first confessed to the truthfulness of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in word and deed, and then requested him to give an interpretation of a dream. The dream he related was: The king has seen that seven fat cows are being eaten by seven lean ones; and he has seen that there are seven ears of grain which are green and seven others which are dry.

After having related the dream, this person said: لَعَلِّيٓ أَرۡجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمۡ يَعۡلَمُونَ (so that I may go back to the people, that they may know). It means: If you tell me the interpretation, it is possible that, when I go back to the people and report the interpretation to them, it is likely that, in this way, they get to know your excellence and expertise.

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, the format of events present in the world of autonomous images is what one sees in dreams. In that world, these images have particular meanings. The edifice of the art of inter-

preting dreams solely depends on knowing what a particular autonomous image in that world means. Allah Taʿālā had blessed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with perfection in this art. As soon as he heard the dream related, he knew that seven fat cows and seven green ears denote seven years during which crops will grow well as usual - because animal-driven ploughing to level land and grow grain has a distinct role in it. Similarly, seven lean cows and seven dry ears of grain mean that, after the first seven years, there will be seven years of severe famine. As for the seven lean cows eating the seven fat ones, it means that the grain stored during the first seven years will all be eaten up during those years of famine - remaining there will be some grain needed for sowing.

Obviously, the dream of the king had told him only about seven years of good crops followed by seven years of famine. But, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام also added to it that, following the year of drought, there will be an year of good rains and crops. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام came to know about it either because the total number of years of famine were no more than seven whereby, as the customary practice of Allah would have it, the eighth year would be that of rains and crops. According to early commentator, Qatādah, Allah Taʿālā had Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام know about it through a revelation so that the amount of information they receive could be over and above that which was to be interpreted through the dream - so that the spiritual excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is further enhanced to become the cause of his being released. Then, another factor was added to this. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not consider it sufficient to limit himself to the technical interpretation of the dream only. The fact was that he also gave them a good counsel based on wisdom and fellow-feeling. He advised them to keep the extra produce yielded during the first seven years within the ears of the crop of wheat, so that it may not be affected by bacteria when old. It is borne by experience that grain while in ears is not affected by bacteria.

Said in verse 48 was: ثُمَّ يَأْتِىْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ سَبْعٌ شِدَادٌ يَّأْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ (Then there shall come, after that, seven hard years which shall eat up what you have stored for them). Since, seen in the dream was that seven lean cows ate up the seven fat ones, therefore, while giving his interpretation of the dream, he considered it appropriate to say that the years of the famine will eat up what they had stored over the past years. Though, an

year is no eatable, the sense is that the people and animals will eat up during the time of famine whatever grain was stored up during past years.

The context of the story shows that this person, after having found out the interpretation of the dream, returned to the king and told him about it. He was pleased with it and convinced of the intellectual and spiritual excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. But, the Holy Qur'ān has not considered it necessary to mention all these things because they are self-explanatory. What transpired later was described by saying: وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُوْنِىْ بِهٖ (And the king said, 'Bring him to me.'). It means that the king gave the order that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام be taken out of the prison and be produced before him in his court. So, some emissary of the king arrived at the prison with the message of the king.

Obviously, this was an occasion which should have been welcomed by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He had been in the prison for a long time, restricted and helpless. He wished to be released. When the message of the king arrived at the prison that he was wanted by the king, he should have welcomed it and got himself ready to go. But, Allah Ta'ālā bestows upon His Messengers a very high moral station which other people just cannot comprehend.

The answer he gave to the emissary of the king was:

قَالَ ارْجِعْ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ فَسْئَلْهُ مَابَالُ النِّسْوَةِ الّٰتِىْ قَطَّعْنَ اَيْدِيَهُنَّ اِنَّ رَبِّىْ بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيْمٌ

'Go back to your lord and ask him, 'What about the women who cut their hands?' Surely, my Lord knows their guile well.'

Here, by asking this question, the objective is to find out if he is still held in doubt about what had happened then and if he is still taken to be at some fault in that matter.

Also noteworthy at this stage is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is, in the present context, talking about the women who had cut their hands - he has not mentioned the wife of the 'Azīz who was the main cause of what had happened. In this conduct of his, there was consideration for the right of his master's house where he lived and where he was brought up, something elementally respected by a person of natural gentleness in him. (Qurṭubī)

Then, not any less important was his real purpose, the need to be exonerated from blame conclusively. If proof was needed, it could have come from those women as well. And it would have not brought much of a disgrace on them. Had they confessed to what was the truth, they would have been, at the most, charged for having given false advice only. This would have been contrary to the case of the wife of the 'Azīz for, if she was made a target of the investigations, it would have proved far more disgraceful for her. And, along with this, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ (Surely, my Lord knows their guile well). He said this so that the king too will get to know the truth of the matter - which is a delicate approach to register his innocence in it.

On this occasion, reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and the Jami' of Tirmidhi, following a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه, there is a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in which he said: If I had been in a prison for so long, as Yūsuf عليه السلام had been, and had I then been summoned for release, I would have accepted it immediately.

And in a report from Imām al-Ṭabarī, the words are: The patience, forbearance and many other noble traits of his character are astonishing. When he was asked to give an interpretation of the dream of the king while still being in prison, had I been in his place, I would have, before giving the interpretation, placed a condition that I should be taken out of the prison before I could give an interpretation of that dream. Again, when the emissary of the king brought in the message of his release, had I been in his place, I would have immediately started walking towards the gate of the prison. (Qurṭubī)

It should be noted that the purpose in this Ḥadīth is to praise the patience, forbearance and the many noble traits of the character of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. But, by comparing the response of Sayyidnā Yūsuf in the present situation which he supposedly attributed to himself, he seems to be saying that had he been there in his place, he would have not elected to delay his release. If this is taken to mean that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is calling the conduct of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام better and, in the case of his own august person, he is saying that had he been in his place, he would have not been able to match that preferred conduct, rather, would have settled for the less preferred, it is obviously not upto the station of the one who is called the foremost among prophets, may peace

be upon them all. To answer that, it may be said that he is, no doubt, the foremost among prophets, but the precedence of some other prophet in a certain part of his conduct would not be considered contrary to it.

In addition to that, as said in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, it is also possible that the *modus operandi* employed by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ is an outstanding proof of his patience, forbearance and noble traits of character - and is highly commendable at its place. But, the pragmatic method of doing things which the Holy Prophet ﷺ attributed to himself was particularly appropriate to and better for educating his community and offering to its teeming masses the best course of action likely to bring nothing but good to them. The reason in the present setting is that the temperament of kings changes. Placing trust in them is not a wise thing to do. On an occasion such as this, putting conditions or delaying the process is not the appropriate thing to do for common people. The probability remains that the king may change his opinion and one is left to rot in that prison, as it had long been the practice. As for Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, he is a prophet of Allah. As such, he could have been given to understand by Allah Ta'ālā that the delay he would cause would not go against his interest in any way. But, others do not enjoy that degree of closeness to Allah. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was mercy for all the worlds. In his temperament and taste, he had an elemental rapport with the entire creation of Allah. He always preferred to make things easier and better for the great masses of people. To him this was more important. Therefore, he said: If he had the opportunity, he would have not delayed. Allah knows best.

Verses 51 - 52

قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُنَّ إِذْ رَاوَدْتُّنَّ يُوسُفَ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ ۚ قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلّٰهِ مَا
عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ سُوْٓءٍ ۚ قَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْئٰنَ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ ز اَنَا
رَاوَدْتُّهٗ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ وَاِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ ذٰلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ اَنِّىْ لَمْ اَخُنْهُ
بِالْغَيْبِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِىْ كَيْدَ الْخَآئِنِيْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾

He (the king) said, "What was your case, O women, when you seduced Yūsuf?" They said, "God forbid, we know of

no evil in him." The governor's wife said, "Now the truth has come to light. I did seduce him, and he is of the truthful." [51] **(Then Yūsuf said,) "That was because he (the governor) may know that I did not betray him in his absence and that Allah does not lead the guile of betrayers to success."** [52]

Commentary

When the royal emissary delivered to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام the order of his release and invited him to see the king, he asked him to first have his case investigated through the women who had cut their hands. His approach was based on many wise considerations. Allah Taʿālā bestows on His prophets a perfect faith, He also gives them matching intelligence and insight into matters and conditions they have to face. From the tenor of the royal message, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had deduced that the king of Egypt was going to confer some honour on him after his release from the prison. At that time, wisdom demanded that the reality of the misconduct for which he was blamed and because of which he was confined into the prison must become fully clear before everyone concerned and no one remains in doubt about his innocence. If this was not done, the outcome would be that people would stop talking for a while because of the royal honour bestowed on him, but these doubts would keep ticking in their hearts making them think that he was the person who had violated the honour of his master. That such conditions could emerge in royal courts and the king becomes influenced by such popular thoughts is not a possibility too far out. Therefore, he considered it necessary that this matter should be straightened out and cleaned up before his release. In the second (52) of the two verses cited above, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has himself pointed out to two considerations implied in the way he acted and in the option of delaying his release.

The first consideration was: ذٰلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ اَنِّىْ لَمْ اَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ It means: I delayed my release so that the ʿAzīz of Miṣr comes to know for sure that I did not betray him in any way during his absence.

He was so concerned about making the ʿAzīz of Miṣr become assured of his innocence because he thought it would be terrible if the ʿAzīz of Miṣr continues to harbour doubts in his heart against him and suffer more from them when unable to say much after the royal honour has been conferred on him. If so, he would be displeased with the honour

given to him and far more painful would be the silence he would have to maintain. Since, he had been his master when he lived with him, his pain was too much to bear for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, intrinsically gentle as he was. Then, it was equally obvious that once the 'Azīz of Miṣr came to believe in his innocence, people will stop talking by themselves.

The second consideration he mentions is: وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِىْ كَيْدَ الْخَآئِنِيْنَ , that is, he asked for investigations to be made in order that people may know that Allah does not lead the guile of betrayers to success.

This statement could be taken to mean that an investigation would expose the betrayal of the betrayers and people would stand warned that betrayers are finally disgraced leaving a lesson for others to stay away from doing things like that in the future. Also possible here is another meaning, that is, had Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام received the royal honours in the same climate of doubt, it may have occured to all watchers that it was not impossible to betray and be honoured at the same time. This would have distorted their faith in fidelity and would have driven away the distaste for betrayal from their hearts. However, it was because of these two considerations that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not favour his leaving the prison immediately after having received the message of his release. In fact, there was a touch of royal elegance in his manner when he demanded that his case be investigated first.

A gist of this appears in verse 51: قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُنَّ اِذْ رَاوَدْتُّنَّ يُوْسُفَ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ that is, the king called for the women who had cut their hands and asked them: 'What was your case, O women, when you seduced Yūsuf?' This question of the king tells us that he, on his part, had become certain that the party at fault was not Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He took those women to be at fault, therefore, he said: 'when you seduced Yūsuf.' After that, the answer given by the women appears as follows:

قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلّٰهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ سُوْٓءٍ ؕ قَالَتِ امْرَاَتُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْئٰنَ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ اَنَا رَاوَدْتُّهٗ عَنْ نَّفْسِهٖ وَاِنَّهٗ لَمِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ

They said, 'God forbid, we know of no evil in him.' The governor's wife (also present there) said, 'Now, the truth has come to light. I did seduce him, and he is of the truthful.'

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had not named the wife of the governor, the 'Azīz of Miṣr, as part of the investigations, but that is how things happen

when Allah *jalla thana'uh* decides to honour someone - people would rise and speak up, come forward and tell the truth, without let or hinderance or demur. So it was on this occasion. The wife of the governor found the courage. She herself proclaimed the truth.

Upto this point, in what you have heard about Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, there is good guidance for our lives and solutions of many problems as well. Eight of such rulings have appeared under our comments on Verses 36-42. An additional six which come out from the present verses are being given below.

Rulings:

9. Allah Ta'ālā Himself manages things for His favoured servants by releasing unseen arrangements which help them achieve their objectives - for He does not like them to become indebted to anyone else created by Him. This was the reason why the message of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام given to the prisoner-to-be-released in which he was asked to mention him to the king was made to be forgotten. Later, in its place, a very special arrangement was made through the workings of the unseen which was designed to serve two objectives at the same time, that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام would not become indebted to anyone's favour to start with, and that the main purpose of his release from the prison would stand achieved with full honour and dignity waiting for him.

To set this unseen plan in motion, the king of Egypt was made to see a disturbing dream, the interpretation of which proved to be beyond the abilities of the experts he had at his court. So, driven by need, recourse had to be made to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. (Ibn Kathīr)

10. Prophetic conduct is a mirror of high morals. Consider the behaviour of the prisoner who was released. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had simply asked him to mention his name to the king. But he was unable to do even this much for him. As a result of his neglect, he had to spend seven more years in the prison. Now the same prisoner returns to him after seven years carrying a job of his own, that of finding out the interpretation of the same king's dream, the king to whom he had been asked to mention Sayyidnā Yūsuf's name and which he did not. In a situation like that, it was natural that he should have admonished him, even become angry at him for not having done something so insignificant. But, Sayyid-

nā Yūsuf ﷺ acted in accord with his prophetic morals when he, not to say much about an admonition, did not even mention the episode itself. (Ibn Kathīr & Qurṭubī)

11. Anbiyā' and 'Ulamā' have a dual duty. They should naturally be concerned about the attitude of people towards their 'Ākhirah. They have to help them out with good counsel in this crucial matter by shielding them from deeds which will become their punishment in the 'Ākhirah. Then, along with it, they should also keep a constant watch on the economic condition of Muslims so that they do not suffer - as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ. On this occasion, he did not consider it sufficient to simply give the interpretation of the dream. Instead, he gave a wise and well-meaning advice as well. He suggested to them that they should leave the entire wheat crop in the ears only taking out what was needed so that the grain so stored would not go bad in later years.

12. An 'Ālim whose guidance is relied upon by Muslims should also watch out that he is not suspected by people - even though such a suspicion be totally unfounded. Efforts should be made to stay safe from this too - because suspicion, whether from ignorance or misunderstanding, does interfere with the work of *da'wah* and teaching they carry out, and goes on to lighten the effect of what is said. (Qurṭubī) The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: Stay away even from places and occasions of blame. It means that one should try to stay away from places and occasions where and when someone gets an opportunity to put a blame on the next person. This rule applies to Muslims generally. Those who are prominent among them, the 'Ulamā' particularly, they have to observe twice as much precaution. The example of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is before us. He was Divinely protected from all defects and sins. He too made a point to observe this precaution. Once, when one of his blessed wives was passing by a small side-street of Madīnah with him, some Companion appeared before them. While he was still some distance away from them, the Holy Prophet ﷺ told him that such and such wife of his was with him. He did this so that the onlooker does not fall into some doubt that the lady going there was a stranger. In the present situation, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, despite orders for his release and the invitation to see the king, tried well before his release that any doubts people may have should be removed.

13. If someone is obligated to a person, because of his rights on him and is, as such, deserving of respect, then, should there come a situation in which, under inevitable circumstances, some sort of action has to be taken against that person, in that case too, giving due consideration to the right and respect of that person, to the best of one's ability, is the duty of a thorough gentleman. This is as it was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to secure his absolvement from the blame. It will be recalled that while referring his matter for investigations, he had not named either the 'Azīz of Miṣr, or his wife. He had simply mentioned the women who had cut their hands. (Qurṭubī) - because, he could still achieve his objective.

14. Taught here are the highest and noblest traits of character. We can see that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had suffered the loss of his freedom for seven or twelve years in the prison but, when he was released, the taking of revenge was a far cry, he did not even bear by the idea that someone would be put to the least inconvenience on his account - as particularly taken into consideration in the verse: لِيَعْلَمَ أَنِّي لَمْ أَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ (so that he may know that I did not betray him in his absence - 52).

Verses 53 - 57

وَمَآ أُبَرِّئُ نَفْسِيْ ۚ إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوْٓءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّيْ ۗ إِنَّ
رَبِّيْ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُوْنِيْ بِهٖٓ أَسْتَخْلِصْهُ لِنَفْسِيْ ۚ
فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهٗ قَالَ إِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِيْنٌ أَمِيْنٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ قَالَ اجْعَلْنِيْ عَلٰى
خَزَآئِنِ الْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنِّيْ حَفِيْظٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوْسُفَ فِي
الْأَرْضِ ۚ يَتَبَوَّأُ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَآءُ ۗ نُصِيْبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَّشَآءُ وَلَا
نُضِيْعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَلَأَجْرُ الْاٰخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَكَانُوْا
يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ ع

"And I do not absolve my inner self of blame. Surely, man's inner self often incites to evil, unless my Lord shows mercy. Certainly, my Lord is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful." [53]

And the king said, "Bring him to me, and I shall make him (work) for myself alone." So, when he (the king) talked to him (Yūsuf), he said, "To day you are with us firmly accomodated and trusted." [54] **He said, "Appoint me to (supervise) the treasures of the land. I am indeed a knowledgeable keeper."** [55]

And thus We gave Yūsuf power in the land. He could settle there wherever he wished. We extend Our mercy to whomsoever We will, and We do not waste the reward of those who are good in deeds. [56] **And the reward of the Hereafter is surely better for those who believe and keep fearing Allah.** [57]

Commentary

Claiming Purity for one's own Self is not proper except under special Conditions

Stated in the previous verse (52) was the statement of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that he did not favour his release from the prison before he has been exonerated through a full investigation of the blame imputed to him so that the governor and the king of Egypt can arrive at full certainty that he was not guilty of any betrayal and that the blame was totally unfounded. In this statement, the reference to his freedom from blame and his purity of conduct was being made as based on an inevitable necessity - which outwardly gave the impression of a pronouncement of personal integrity and purity - and that was something not welcome in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā as is proved from the words of the Holy Qur'ān where it is said: اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ يُزَكُّوْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ بَلِ اللّٰهُ يُزَكِّيْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ (Have you not seen those who claim sanctity for themselves? In fact, Allah sanctifies whomsoever He wills - 4:49). Again, in Sūrah An-Najm, it was said: فَلَا تُزَكُّوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقٰى (Do not claim sanctity for your selves; He knows best who it is that guards against evil - 53:32).

It was for this reason that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has, in the present verse (53), not allowed his plea of innocence in this matter to remain unqualified. As evident, he has stressed upon the reality that by saying what he is saying he has no intention to claim any piety or purity for himself. The truth of the matter is that human self, by nature, keeps pulling everyone to what is bad - except those who are blessed with mercy from the Lord who would make them immunely pure against the evil instigations of their self. They are the blessed prophets. The Qur'ān

calls such immunized selves: نفس مطمئنه (the self or soul at peace) (Al-Fajr: 89:27). Thus, the substance of what Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ said was: In a trial of such magnitude, my remaining safe from sin was no personal achiement of mine. In fact, this was a result of the mercy and help of Allah Taʿālā alone. Had He not removed evil desires from my heart, I would have become like the rest of human beings who would be prone to surrender before their desires.

According to some narrations, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ said this sentence because a kind of 'thought' did, after all, emerge in his heart - though, limited to a non-voluntary scruple - but, was an unwelcome slip anyway considering the elegant station of prophethood with which he was blessed. Therefore, he expressly confessed that he did not totally absolve his inner self from blame.

The Three States of Human Self

In this verse (53), a problem which needs to be considered is that it declares every human self as often inciting to evil: أَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوْءِ (*ammāratum-bis-sū'*). This is as it appears in a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have asked the Ṣaḥābah ؓ: What do you think about a companion who, if you treat him nicely, feed him, clothe him, still he would throw you in all sorts of troubles - and if you insult him, and keep him hungry and naked, he would do what is good for you? The Ṣaḥābah ؓ said: Yā Rasūl Allāh, there just cannot be a companion worse than him in this whole world! He said: By Him in whose hands rests my life, your self inside you is such a companion. (Qurṭubī) And it appears in another Ḥadīth: Your greatest enemy is your own self which not only disgraces you by getting you involved in evil deeds, but also makes you run into all sorts of troubles.

However, the cited verse and Ḥadīth narrations given above tell us that human self does usually demand the doing of what is bad from us. But, in Sūrah Al-Qiyāmah, this very human self has been given the honour of being called by the sobrequit: لوامه (*lawwāmah* : reproaching) placing it at a level that the Lord of All Honour has sworn by it: لَآ أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَلَآ أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ (I do swear by the day of Judgement and I do swear by the reproaching self - 75:1,2). Then, in Sūrah Al-Fajr, by calling this very human self: نفس مطمئنه (*muṭma'innah*: at peace), glad tidings of Jannah have been given: يٰٓاَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِيْٓ اِلٰى رَبِّكِ (O self at peace, come back to

your Lord ... 89:27,28). Thus, the human self has been called as inciting to evil at one place, as reproaching at another, and as being at peace at yet another.

To explain, it can be said that the human self when on its own does incite to evil deeds and is called: Ammārah. But, when one does not follow its dictates because of the fear of Allah and 'Ākhirah, his or her self becomes Lawwāmah, that is, hates evil deeds, repents from them and seeks forgiveness - as is true in the case of the righteous people of the Muslim Ummah at large. And when someone keeps striving hard against his or her self, and brings it to a state where the very urge to turn to evil deeds does not remain there anymore, then, that self becomes what is called: Muṭma'innah (the self at peace). Righteous people can arrive at this state through spiritual strivings. Still, there is no certainty that this state will continue for ever. But, the prophets of Allah, may peace be upon them all, are Divinely blessed with such self at peace without any previous striving - and it always remains constant at that state. Thus, it is in terms of three states of human self that three kinds of acts have been attributed to it.

At the end of the verse (53), it was said: اِنَّ رَبِّىْ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (Certainly, my Lord is the Most-Forgiving,Very-Merciful) which has a hint in the word: غفور : Ghafūr: Most-Forgiving. When the self that incites to evil deeds (Ammārah) is ashamed of its doings, repents, corrects and becomes the reproaching self (Lawwāmah), then, certainly great is the forgiveness of Allah - He will forgive. The word: رحيم (Raḥīm : Very-Merciful) indicates that a person who is blessed with a self at peace (Muṭma'innah), that too is nothing but a result of the mercy of Allah.

In the next verse (54) which begins with the words: وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُوْنِىْ بِهٖ (Bring him to me ...), it has been said, when the king of Egypt investigated about the event, as requested by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, Zulaikhā and all other women concerned with it confessed to the truth. The king, then, ordered that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام be brought to him so that he can appoint him as his personal adviser. According to the royal order, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was brought with full honours from the prison to the royal court. When he got an idea of his full potential by talking to him, the king said: 'Today you are with us firmly accomodated and trusted.'

Imām al-Baghāwī reports: When the emissary of the king arrived again at the prison to convey the invitation of the king to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, he prayed for all inmates of the prison, took a ritual bath and donned a new dress. When he arrived at the royal court, the *du'ā'* he made was:

حَسْبِیْ رَبِّیْ مِنْ دُنْیَایَ وَحَسْبِیْ رَبِّیْ مِنْ خَلْقِهٖ عَزَّجَارُهٗ وَجَلَّ ثَنَاۤئُهٗ وَلَاۤ اِلٰهَ غَیْرُهٗ

For me sufficient is my Lord against my world and, for me, sufficient is my Lord against the whole creation. Mighty is he who comes under His protection; and most sublime is His praise; and there is no deity worthy of worship other than Him.

When he reached inside the court, he turned to Allah again, prayed again in the same spirit and greeted the court in Arabic saying: اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَیْکُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللهِ (Peace on you and the mercy of Allah). For the king, the prayer he made was in Hebrew. The king, though he knew many languages, was not aware of Arabic and Hebrew. It was Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ who told him that the Salām was in Arabic and the Du'ā', in Hebrew.

It also appears in a narration that the king talked to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ in many different languages and Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ replied to him in the language spoken by him, adding Arabic and Hebrew as two additional languages which the king did not know. This episode greatly increased respect for Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ in the heart of the king.

After that, the king wished to hear him give the interpretation of his dream directly before him. In response, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ first described before him particular details of his dream which he himself had not told anyone about, and then told him the interpretation as he had wished.

The king was astonished. Though, it was not so much about the interpretation given. What made him really wonder was how could he find out all those details. After that, the king sought his counsel on what should he do next. The advice given by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was: During the first seven years of expected heavy rains, you should have arrangements made so that cultivation and crops yield their highest. This could be done by giving incentives to people to make sure that their maximum land areas come under cultivation and crops turn out plentiful

- and let them keep storing one fifth of their total produce with them. Thus, the people of Egypt would have stored with them enough for the seven years of famine and you would not have to worry on their account. Keep whatever supply of grains comes to the government through fixed taxes or state lands stored for those coming from outside the country - because, this famine will be wide-spread. People living in adjoining countries would need your help. At that time, you may come to the help of many a deprived people around you by giving it to them. Even if you were to put an ordinary price on it, you can be sure of collecting in the government treasury the amount of wealth that had never been there. The king was immensely pleased with this advice, but did wonder how would such a stupendous plan be managed, and who would do that. Thereupon, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَآئِنِ الْأَرْضِ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ that is, 'appoint me to the treasures of the land (which includes the produce of the land) for I am indeed a knowledgeable keeper (fully capable of conserving and guarding it, and aware of where to spend and how much to spend). (Qurṭubī & Maẓharī)

In the two words appearing here (*ḥafīẓ* and *'alīm*), Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has combined together all functional virtues a genuine Finance Minister should have. To make it simple, it can be said that the chief trustee and manager of a national treasury needs to do two things: (1) He should not allow government property to be wasted, in fact, should collect, conserve and protect it fully. Then, he should see to it that it is not spent on non-deserving people, or on false heads of expenditure. (2) Then, he should not fall short in spending what has to be spent and where it has to be spent and, at the same time, he should not spend more than the quantum of the need. Thus, the word: حَفِيظٌ (*ḥafīẓ* : keeper) is the full guarantee of the first need, and the word: عَلِيمٌ (*'alīm* : knowledgeable), that of the second.

Though the king of Egypt was personally attached to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام because of his many excellences, honesty and wisdom, but he did not actually hand over the office of the Finance Ministry to him. However, he did make him stay with him as his honoured guest for a year.

After the passage of one year, not only that he appointed him to be the Finance Minister, but also entrusted to him the management of the rest of his state affairs. Perhaps, he thought that giving such major of-

fice to him without first getting acquainted with his manners, morals and habits by keeping him close to him at his house was not appropriate.

Some commentators have written, when Qiṭfīr (Potiphar), the husband of Zulaikhā died during this period, the king of Egypt arranged her marriage with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Then, he said to her: Is it not better than what you had wished? Zulaikhā confessed to her being at fault, giving her excuse for having done what she did.

Allah *jalla thana'uh* granted them a life full of honour and comfort. According to historical narrations, they were also blessed with two sons, named Ifrā'īm and Manshā.

According to some narrations, after the marriage, Allah Ta'ālā had put in the heart of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام more love for Zulaikhā than she ever had for him. So much so that there came a time when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام complained to her: Why is it that you do not love me as much as you did before? Zulaikhā told him: Through you I am now blessed with the love of Allah Ta'ālā. With this in view, other relationships and thoughts seem to have dimmed out. This episode has been described, along with some other details, in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Maẓharī.

Many teachings and guidelines which appear as part of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and are good for all human beings, have been talked about earlier. Some others are being mentioned as follows:

Rulings and Guidelines

1. In the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: وَمَآ أُبَرِّئُ نَفْسِی (And I do not absolve my inner self of blame - 53), there is good guidance for the servants of Allah who fear Him and are righteous, pious and abstaining. They should realize that they should not, when they have the Taufīq of remaining safe from some sin, wax proud about it, never taking those involved with sins as low and inferior. Instead of that, they should ponder over the saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, let it go into their heart and become its fixed response - that is, 'this is no personal achievement of ours; it is only Allah Ta'ālā whose grace stopped our inner self, which incites to evil, overcome us - otherwise, this self of man would often pull him towards deeds which are evil.'

Seeking a Government Office is Not Permissible - Except under Particular Conditions

2. From: اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ (Appoint me to (supervise) the treasures of the land - 54), we learn that the seeking of an office or position with the government is permissible under particular conditions - as was done by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام when he sought to be appointed to supervise and manage the treasures of the land.

But, in the light of details regarding this matter, when it is known about a particular office that no one else would be able to manage it well - and one's honest self-assessment indicates that he will be able to discharge the responsibilities of that office well enough, and that there is, in it, no danger of getting involved in some sin - then, this would be a situation in which taking the initial step of seeking the office is also permissible, subject to the condition that the reason for doing this should not be the love of recognition, power and wealth. Instead, the main purpose behind this should be to serve Allah's creation genuinely and to carry to them their rights with justice and equity - as it was with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام whose sole purpose was no other but this. But, wherever such a situation does not prevail, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited the seeking of any government office on one's own. And he did not give an office to anyone who himself made a request for it.

It appears in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidnā 'Abd-ur-Raḥmān ibn Samurah رضي الله عنه: Never seek an office (of authority or responsibility) because even if you get it by asking for it, the support of Allah Ta'ālā, through which you could stay safe from slips and errors, will not be there. And if you get an office without the asking and seeking, help and support of Allah Ta'ālā will be there, because of which, you will be able to fulfill the rights of that office as due.

Similarly, according to another Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, someone requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he be appointed to a certain office. To him, he said:

إِنَّا لَنْ نَّسْتَعْمِلَ عَلَى عَمَلِنَا مَنْ أَرَادَهُ

'We would not give our office to a person who asks for it.'

The Seeking of Office by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was based on a Wise and Benign Consideration

But, the case of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ is different. He knew that the king of Egypt is a disbeliever. So is his staff. The country was going to be hit by a famine. At that time, selfish people would have no mercy for the creation of Allah and millions would die of hunger. There was no one around who could be relied upon to do justice with the rights of common people. Therefore, he himself made a request for that office of responsibility - though, he had to support his request by pointing out to some areas of his expertise, as a matter of necessity, of course, so that the king becomes satisfied and entrusts the office with him.

Even today, if someone feels that there is an office of government for which there is no one available, specially someone who would discharge the responsibilities of that office as due - and his honest self-assessment assures that he would be able to discharge the responsibilities of that office as due - then, it is permissible for him, in fact, it is obligatory (*wājib*) on him to seek that office. But, this will not be to satisfy his own desire for recognition, power or wealth. Instead, it has to be for the purpose of serving people, a mission which relates to the intention and plan in the heart, something which is all too open before Allah Ta'ālā. (Qurṭubī)

That the rightly-guided Khulafā', may Allah be pleased with them all, assumed the responsibilities of the office of Khilāfah was because they knew that no one else would be able to discharge that responsibility at that time as due. The differences attributed to Sayyidnā 'Alī, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, Sayyidnā Ḥusain, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr and others ﷺ were all based on that conviction. Everyone of them thought that he would be the one to discharge the responsibilities of Khilāfah at that time with more wisdom and strength and better than others. None of them was motivated to seek recognition, power or wealth as his principal aim.

Is It Permissible to Accept an Office of a Kāfir Government?

3. Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ accepted to serve under the king of Egypt, though he was a disbeliever. This tells us that accepting an office of government headed by a disbelieving or sinning ruler is permissible under particular conditions.

But, Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ, while commenting on the verse: فَلَنْ اَكُوْنَ ظَهِيْرًا

لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ (never shall I be a help to those who sin - 28:17), has written: In the light of this verse, it is not permissible to help the unjust and the disbelieving. And it is obvious that, accepting an office in their government amounts to becoming a part of their function and providing help to them. Such help has been declared as Ḥarām (forbidden) in many verses of the Holy Qur'ān.

As for the position of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in this matter, not only that he accepted the office, in fact, asked for it. According to the respected Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, the reason for this was that the king of Egypt had become a believer, a Muslim, at that time. Since there is no proof in the Qur'ān and Sunnah which could support this proposition, the majority of commentators have given another reason for his action. According to them, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had already found out about the king of Egypt that he would not interfere in the performance of his duties. He will not compel him to enforce laws contrary to his faith. He will give him full rights to act in accordance with his discretion and in line with the law of truth. With such rights and powers in hand when one is not compelled to obey a law counter to his Sharī'ah, it is possible that one may serve under someone unjust and disbelieving - though, the repugnance of having to help and cooperate with that unjust and disbelieving person remains where it initially was. But, there are circumstances in which it is not possible to remove such a person from the office of power held by him. Then, on the other hand, if there be a strong apprehension that by not accepting the office under that person, rights of many servants of Allah will be wasted, or that they may be oppressed, then, this would be a situation of compulsion, and there is this much room for cooperation in the matter. This stands proved from the conduct of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which is covered by the provision that one would not have to commit something which goes against the Sharī'ah one believes in - because, this will not be helping him in his sin, though, it may do so as a remote cause. But, as for the remote causes of help, there is room in the Sharī'ah under given conditions. Details have been described by Muslim jurists. Many righteous elders among the Ṣaḥābah and Ṭābi'īn have faced such conditions and it stands proved that they, under such conditions, have accepted to work on offices given by oppressive rulers. (Qurṭubī & Maẓharī)

'Allāma Al-Māwardī, in his book about the political implications of religious law has said: Some commentators, on the basis of what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did in this matter, have ruled the accepting of office with rulers who do not believe and are unjust as permissible, subject to the condition that one does not have to do anything against the Sharī'ah. Other commentators have ruled that it is not permissible even with this condition attached, because this too supports and promotes people who are unjust and oppressive. They give many interpretations of what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did. The substance is that this conduct of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was particular to his person, or to his Sharī'ah. Now, it is not permissible for others. However, the majority of Muslim scholars and jurists have gone by the first proposition and ruled it as permissible.(Qurṭubī)

According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, when it is known that, should the learned and the righteous refuse to accept such office, rights of people will be wasted and justice will not be done, then, accepting such office is permissible, in fact, it is an act of *thawāb* - subject to the condition that, while working on it, one is not compelled to do things which are against the Sharī'ah.

A Functional Statement of Some Personal Ability is Not Included under Self-Sanctification prohibited by the Holy Qur'ān

4. The saying of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: اِنِّىْ حَفِيْظٌ عَلِيْمٌ (I am a knowledgeable keeper) proves that mentioning some personal qualities, expertise or ability when there is a need to do that is not included under self-sanctification which has been prohibited in the Holy Qur'ān - of course, subject to the condition that such mentioning is not prompted by pride, arrogance or boastfulness.

The Objective of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was to Establish the Dīn of Allah

Said in verse 55 was:

وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۚ يَتَبَوَّاُ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَآءُ ۗ نُصِيْبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَّشَآءُ
وَلَا نُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ

> And thus We gave Yūsuf power in the land. He could settle there wherever he wished. We extend Our mercy to whomsoever We will, and We do not waste the reward of those who are good in deeds.

For details, it can be said that, after an experimental period of one year, the king of Egypt arranged a special celebration in his court to which he invited all officials and dignitaries of the state. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was brought into the gathering with a crown on his head. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was given, not simply the charge of the state treasury, but the charge of virtually the whole state. Having done this, the king himself retired from active involvement with the affairs of the state. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī and others)

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام managed the affairs of the state with such ability that no one had any reason to complain. The whole country loved him. Peace and prosperity prevailed all over. Even Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام himself faced no problems or pains in executing the many responsibilities of the government.

Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, has said: Since Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, under the surface grandeur of his rule over the country, aimed at nothing but that the command of Allah Ta'ālā be carried out there and that the faith given by Him becomes firmly established. Therefore, he never lost sight of his basic objective, that is, inviting the king of Egypt to faith and Islām. As time passed, his efforts bore fruits by the grace of Allah and the king of Egypt too became a believing Muslim.

Shun Sin, Have Faith, Keep Fearing Allah: The Reward of the Hereafter is Yours Too

At the end, verse 57 declares:

وَلَأَجْرُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ

> And the reward of the Hereafter is surely better for those who keep fearing Allah.

It means that Allah had already blessed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with temporal power, wealth and an ideal state - waiting for him were the high ranks of the 'Ākhirah as well. Then, it has also been made clear that the rewards and ranks of the present world and the world-to-come were not restricted to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. This was an open invitation to everyone who elects to believe, abstain from evil and keep fearing Allah.

During his tenure of rule, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ had accomplished great projects designed to bring peace and comfort to the masses of his people. Their parallel would be hard to find. When, according to his interpretation of the dream, seven years of prosperity passed by and the famine set in, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ abandoned eating to his fill. People said: You have the treasures of the land of Egypt in your possession, yet you go hungry? He said: I do this so that the feeling for the hunger of my common people does not disappear from my heart. He even took an administrative step in this matter. The royal cooks were ordered to prepare only one meal a day, at lunch time, so that the residents of the royal palace too could somehow share in the mass hunger of their people!

Verses 58 - 62

وَجَآءَ إِخْوَةُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُۥ مُنكِرُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾
وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُم بِجَهَازِهِمْ قَالَ ائْتُونِى بِأَخٍ لَّكُم مِّنْ أَبِيكُمْ ۚ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ
أَنِّىٓ أُوفِى الْكَيْلَ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنزِلِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ فَإِن لَّمْ تَأْتُونِى بِهِۦ فَلَا كَيْلَ
لَكُمْ عِندِى وَلَا تَقْرَبُونِ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالُوا سَنُرَاوِدُ عَنْهُ أَبَاهُ وَإِنَّا لَفَاعِلُونَ
﴿٦١﴾ وَقَالَ لِفِتْيَانِهِ اجْعَلُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ فِى رِحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُونَهَآ إِذَا
انقَلَبُوٓا إِلَىٰٓ أَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

And came the brothers of Yūsuf and appeared before him. He recognized them, while they were not to recognize him. [58]

And when he equipped them with their provisions, he said, 'Bring to me your step brother from your father's side. Do you not see that I give full measure and I am the best of hosts? [59] **Still, if you do not bring him to me, then you deserve no measure from me, nor shall you come even close to me."** [60]

They said, "We shall persuade his father about him and we will certainly do it." [61]

And he (Yūsuf) said to his boys, "put their capital in their camel-packs. Perhaps they will recognize it when they are back in their family. Perhaps they will come

back." [62]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was blessed by Allah Ta'ālā with full control over the country of Egypt. Described in the verses cited above is the coming of the brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to procure foodgrains. As a corollary, it was also mentioned that the brothers who came to Egypt were ten in number. The younger brother, the real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was not with them on this trip.

The details of the story in between were not given by the Qur'ān since they can be understood contextually.

The details described by Ibn Kathīr with reference to Tafsīr authorities, Suddiyy, Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq and others, even if borrowed from historical and Israelite reports, may be acceptable in a certain measure since indicators in this direction are available in the sequential arrangement of the Qur'ān itself.

The authorities cited above have said that following the ministerial authority of Egypt having come into the hands of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the first seven years were, true to the interpretation of the dream, years of great prosperity and well-being for the entire country. Crops were abundant and matching were the efforts to produce and conserve. After that, the second part of this very dream unfolded itself. Came the famine which continued for full seven years. Since, at that time, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام knew in advance that this famine will continue for seven years without any break, therefore, he made arrangements to have the stock of grains present in the country stored very carefully during the initial year of the famine and saw to it that it remained preserved and protected fully and satisfactorily.

As for the local people of Egypt, foodgrain sufficient for their need was stored with them well ahead of the time. When famine spread and people living in areas around Egypt started coming there, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام set up a working system of selling grains to them according to which he would not give to one person more than one camel-load of grain. Its quantity, according to al-Qurṭubī, was one Wasaq, that is, sixty Ṣā' which, according to our weight, comes to approximately 1,953

grams.

Such was his concern for this responsibility that he himself used to oversee the sale of foodgrains. As said earlier, this famine was not limited to Egypt only. It was spread out to areas far away. The land of Can'aan, a part of Palestine - the homeland of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام with one of its cities still surviving by the name Khalīl, known for the resting places of blessed prophets Ibrāhīm, Isḥāq, Ya'qūb and Yūsuf عليهم السلام - even this could not escape the ravages of the famine. Naturally, the family of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام became anxious. That was a time when news had gone around that Egypt was the place where foodgrains could be procured on payment. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had also come to know that the king of Egypt was a man of mercy and would let those who needed it have it. So, he asked his sons too to go and get some grains from Egypt.

And as they had also come to know that one person is not given more than a camel-load of grains, it was decided to send all sons on the trip. But, the youngest brother, Benyamin, the real brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام with whom Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had become very attached since the disappearance of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was held back by the father for his comfort and care.

Traveling from Can'aan, the ten brothers reached Egypt. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام appeared in his royal robe as the master of the land before his brothers who had sold him as a seven year old child to the people of the caravan - an event over which, at that time, according to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, forty years had passed. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

It is obvious that the passage of such a long time would cause great changes in the looks of a person. It could have never occured to them that a child once sold as a slave could become the king or minister of some country. Therefore, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not recognize him. But, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did. Therefore, this is what the expression: فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكِرُوْنَ (He recognized them, while they were not to recognize him - 58) appearing in the opening verse means - for in the Arabic language, the real meaning of the word: إِنْكَار (*inkār*) is 'to take as stranger.' Therefore, the word: مُنْكِرُوْنَ (*munkirūn*) in the text comes to mean 'unable to recognize.'

About the recognizing of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, Ibn Kathīr has said, on the authority of Suddiyy: When these ten brothers reached the court, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام interrogated them as is done with suspicious people so that they would state the truth clearly. First of all, he asked them: You are not residents of Egypt. You speak Hebrew. How did you get here? They said: There is a great famine in our country. We have heard about you, therefore, we are here to get some grain. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام asked again: How do we know that you are telling the truth, and that you are not an enemy spy? Then, all brothers said: God forbid, we can never do that. We are the sons of the Prophet of Allah Ya'qūb عليه السلام who lives in Can'aan.

The purpose of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in asking these questions was to make his brothers open up and relate events fully. So, then he asked: Does your father have any child other than you? They said: We were twelve brothers out of whom one of the younger brothers disappeared in the forest. Our father loved him most. After him, he became attached to his younger real brother and that is why he did not send him along with us on this trip so that he can be a source of his comfort.

After having heard what they said, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام gave orders that they be lodged as royal guests and given grains according to set rules.

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had established a standing rule of procedure while distributing grains. He would not give more than one camel-load of grains to one person at one time. But, once this was consumed as calculated, he would allow it to be given a second time.

Having found out all those details from his brothers, it was only natural that he would think about a second visit by them. For this purpose in sight, one obvious arrangement he made was to tell his brothers:

ائْتُونِي بِأَخٍ لَّكُم مِّنْ أَبِيكُمْ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أُوفِي الْكَيْلَ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنزِلِينَ

Bring to me your step brother from your father's side. Do you not see that I give full measure and I am the best of hosts? - 59

And, along with it, he gave them a warning as well:

فَإِن لَّمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَا كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِندِي وَلَا تَقْرَبُونِ

Still, if you do not bring him to me, then you deserve no measure from me [because it will prove that you have lied to me, and thus], nor shall you come even close to me. - 60

Then, he made a secret arrangement as well. He ordered his young workers on the job to collect the cash, jewelry and any other articles paid by his brothers as the cost of the grains, and tie it up secretly with their supplies in the camel-packs in a way that they should remain unaware of it while there - so that, when they open their packs after having arrived home, and find their cash and jewelry back in their hands, they may have a reason to return for grains once again.

Ibn Kathīr has described several possibilities as to why Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ acted the way he did: (1) It occured to him that, perhaps they may not have anything other than the cash and jewelry they had brought. If so, they would be unable to come for the grains again. (2) Perhaps, he could not bear by the idea of taking the price of foodstuff from his father and brothers, therefore, he paid the amount due from his pocket and had it deposited in the royal treasury, and returned their cash and jewelry back to them. (3) He knew when their cash and jewelry is found in their supplies back home and his father learns about it, then he, being a prophet of Allah, would consider what has been thus found to be a trust of the Egyptian Treasury and would certainly have it returned, therefore, the return of their brothers would become more assured.

However, it can be said briefly that Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ made all these arrangements so that his brothers could keep coming to him in the future and that he could also meet his younger real brother.

A Ruling:

From this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, we learn that, should the economic condition of a country worsen to the limit that the failure of the government to check the decline may cause people to become deprived of the basic necessities of life, then, the government is justified in taking over the regulation and control of such supplies and it could also fix an appropriate price of foodgrains. Muslim jurists have explained this provision in details.

A Special Note:

There is something which strikes as unusual in this story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. We see that his exalted father, the prophet of Allah, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was so affected by his separation that constant weeping made him lose his eyesight. Then, on the other hand, we have Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, a prophet and messenger of Allah like him, one who naturally loved his father and knew his rights on him fully well. But, during this long period of forty years, how was it that it did not occur to him even once that his father must be missing him miserably and that it would be nice to let him know about his well-being through some source. The sending of such information was not too far out a proposition even when he had reached Egypt as a slave. Then, once he was in the home of the 'Azīz of Miṣr, he had the freedom, comfort and time to do that. It was not so difficult to send a message to his home through some source. For that matter, this could have been done when he was in the prison as well. Who does not know that messages from inside those walls can be delivered anywhere, near or far? Then, came the time when Allah Ta'ālā took him out of the prison with all honours and the authority over the land of Egypt became his own. That was a time when he should have presented himself before his father as his primary task. And had it been against some state consideration, he could have at the least sent an emissary to comfort his father, something ordinary given the status he had.

But, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has not been reported to have even intended to do that. Not to say much about his intention, when his brothers came to procure foodgrains, he sent them back without telling them about the real situation.

These are conditions which cannot be imagined about an ordinary human being. How was it possible for an exalted messenger of Allah to bear by this situation?

The only answer to this surprising silence which kept returning to me was that may be Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite wisdom, had stopped Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from exposing himself. This was found authetically clarified in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that Allah Ta'ālā had, through a Waḥy (revelation), stopped Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from sending any news about himself to his home.

It is Allah alone who knows the workings of His infinite wisdom. To comprehend it all is humanly impossible. But, once in a while, there may be something one could see through. Here too, as it appears, the real consideration of wisdom was to complete the trial of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. This was the reason why, at the very initial stage of the event, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had realized that his son, Yūsuf, was not eaten up by a wolf but that it was some trick of his brothers, the natural demand of the situation was that he should have visited the place of the reported incident and made necessary investigations. But, as Allah Ta'ālā would have it, he was unable to think on those lines. Then, after a long passage of time, he also said to his brothers: 'Go and search for Yūsuf and his brother.' When Allah Ta'ālā wills to do something, this is the way He would put all its causes together.

Verses 63 - 66

فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوٓا إِلَىٰٓ أَبِيهِمْ قَالُوا يَٰٓأَبَانَا مُنِعَ مِنَّا الْكَيْلُ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَآ أَخَانَا
نَكْتَلْ وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَحَٰفِظُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ قَالَ هَلْ ءَامَنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا كَمَآ أَمِنتُكُمْ
عَلَىٰٓ أَخِيهِ مِن قَبْلُ ط فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَٰفِظًا ص وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّٰحِمِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾
وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوا مَتَٰعَهُمْ وَجَدُوا بِضَٰعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ إِلَيْهِمْ ط قَالُوا يَٰٓأَبَانَا
مَا نَبْغِى ط هَٰذِهِۦ بِضَٰعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا ج وَنَمِيرُ أَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ أَخَانَا
وَنَزْدَادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيرٍ ط ذَٰلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُۥ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ
تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَتَأْتُنَّنِى بِهِۦٓ إِلَّآ أَن يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ ج فَلَمَّآ ءَاتَوْهُ
مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ ﴿٦٦﴾

So, when they returned to their father, they said, "O our father, the (required) measure (of grain) has been withheld from us, therefore, send our brother with us, so that we may receive our full measure. And, of course, we are his guards." [63]

He said, "Shall I trust you about him as I trusted you earlier about his brother? Well, Allah is the best guardian and He is the most-merciful of all the merciful." [64]

And when they opened their baggage, they found their capital given back to them. They said, "Our father, what else do we want? Here is our capital given back to us, and we shall bring food to our family, protect our brother and add the measure of one camel more. That is an easy measure." [65]

He said, "I shall never send him with you until you give me a pledge in the name of Allah that you will definitely bring him back to me, unless you are overpowered (by circumstances)." So, when they gave him their pledge, he said, "Allah is watchful over what we say." [66]

Commentary

The verses appearing above carry the remaining segment of the event, that is, when the brothers of Yūsuf returned home with foodgrains from Egypt, they told their father about what had happened there, specially about the condition imposed by the 'Azīz of Miṣr that they would receive foodgrains in the future only if they would bring their younger brother with them. So they requested their father to let Benyamin also accompany them in order that they may receive foodgrains in the future as well. Then, they would be there to protect this brother of theirs at its best with assurance that they would see to it that he faces no inconvenience during the trip.

Their father asked them if they wanted him to trust them with Benyamin as he had done before with their brother, Yūsuf. The drive of his remark makes it obvious that he did not trust their word. He had trusted them once, and suffered - for they had promised in the same words spoken earlier that they would guard him.

This much was an answer to what they had said. But, he had the need of the family in sight, and because he was blessed with the quality of trust in the Divine dispension of matters, he talked about the reality as he knew it saying, in effect, that man has no control over his gain or loss unless Allah Ta'ālā Himself so wills. And when He wills it, it cannot be diverted or averted by anyone. Therefore, it is incorrect to place one's trust in the created beings of Allah in this matter and equally inappropriate is the dependence on their complaints to settle it.

Therefore, he said: فَاللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ حٰفِظًا (Well, Allah is the best guardian - 64), that is, he had already seen the outcome of their guardianship earlier,

now he was placing his trust in Allah Ta'ālā alone as his guardian. Then, he added: وَهُوَ اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ (and He is the most merciful of all the merciful - 64), that is, only from Him, he could hope that He would look at his old age and the sorrows he was surrounded with and would not let more shocks shake him.

In short, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not rely on apparent conditions and on the pledges given by his sons, but did agree to send his youngest son with his brothers solely because he had now placed his trust in Allah Ta'ālā.

At this stage, verse 65 opens with the words:

وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوْا مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُوْا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ اِلَيْهِمْ ۭ قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَا مَا نَبْغِيْ ۭ هٰذِهٖ بِضَاعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ اِلَيْنَا ۚ وَنَمِيْرُ اَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ اَخَانَا وَنَزْدَادُ كَيْلَ بَعِيْرٍ ۭ ذٰلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَّسِيْرٌ

And when they opened their baggage, they found their capital given back to them. They said, "Our father, what else do we want? Here is our capital given back to us, and we shall bring food to our family, protect our brother and add the measure of one camel more. That is an easy measure."

It will be noticed that, prior to this verse, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were talking about what had happened to them on their journey, before they had opened their baggage. After that, when they opened the baggage and saw that their entire capital with which they had paid for the foodgrains was present inside the baggage, they realized that this was not done by mistake, in fact, their capital had been returned to them. Therefore, they said: رُدَّتْ اِلَيْنَا (given back to us). Then, to their father they said: مَا نَبْغِيْ (what else do we want?) that is, 'the grains are here and what we paid for it has also been returned to us. Now we should definitely go back there in peace with our brother because the way we have been treated shows that the 'Azīz of Miṣr is kind to us. We should have no apprehensions. It is the time that we go and bring foodgrains for the family and take care of our brother too. That we shall get an additional load of grains in the name of our brother will help - because, whatever we have brought in the present trip is much less than our needs and is likely to be consumed soon.

One sense of the sentence: مَا نَبْغِيْ (*mā nabghī*) spoken by the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is practically the same as given immediately

above, that is, 'what else do we want?' And if, in this sentence, the letter: مَا (*mā* : not) is taken in the sense of negation, it could also mean that the sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ told their father: Now that we have the price of the grain with us, we do not want anything from you. You just send our brother with us.

After hearing what they said, their father answered: لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتّٰى تُؤْتُوْنِ مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لَتَأْتُنَّنِيْ بِهٖ (I shall never send Benyamin with you until you give me a pledge in the name of Allah that you will definitely bring him back to me - 66). But, could someone with the ability to see reality ever miss to realize that man, no matter how strong he may be, is, after all, dependent and helpless before the all-pervading power of Allah *jalla thanā'uh* - how then, and on what basis, would he give a pledge to bring back someone safe? The reason is that he does not have the absolute power and control to accomplish it. Therefore, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ asked his sons to give him a pledge, he added an exception to it by saying: اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّحَاطَ بِكُمْ 'unless you are overpowered (by circumstances).' Early Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid explains it as: unless all of you are killed. Another early Tafsīr authority, Qatādah says that it means: unless you become totally helpless and overpowered.

In the last sentence of verse 66, it was said: فَلَمَّآ اٰتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى مَا نَقُوْلُ وَكِيْلٌ (So, when they gave him their pledge, he said, "Allah is watchful over what we say"), that is, when his sons gave the pledge as desired on solemn oaths to satisfy their father, then, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ told them that the giving and taking of solemn oaths being undertaken by them is something which ultimately rests with Allah Ta'ālā alone. It is with His *taufīq* only that one person can keep the other protected and thus become enabled to fulfill his pledge. Otherwise, man is helpless. He has nothing under his personal control.

There are many elements of guidance and injunctions for people in the verses explained above. Please take note of them and keep them in mind.

Notes of Guidance

1. If children make mistakes, relations should not be cut off with them. One should, rather, think of ways to reform their conduct. The mistakes made by the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ were serious.

They were sins, major and grave:

(1) They lied to their father and made him agree to send Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام for an outing with them.

(2) They gave a pledge to their father, then broke it.

(3) They treated their young and innocent brother cruelly.

(4) They caused extreme pain to their father and did not care much about it.

(5) They conspired to kill an innocent human being.

(6) They sold a free human being forcibly and unjustly.

These were extreme and severe crimes which demanded that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, once he had understood that they had lied and wasted the life of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام knowingly, should have severed his relationship with these sons, or turned them out of his house. But, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not do that, rather, let them keep living with him, even sent them to Egypt to bring back foodgrains from there. On top of this came the situation when they had another opportunity to prevail upon their father once again in the case of their youngest brother and on this occasion too he yielded to them and allowed them to take his young son with them.

This tells us that should one's children fall into sin or make mistakes, it is the responsibility of the father to seek their correction through appropriate education and training, and as long as there is hope of betterment, let him not severe his relationship with them. This was what Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did - and finally, all of them were ashamed of their wrongdoings, turned away from sins and lived a reformed life. However, should there remain no hope of betterment in their condition, and parents realize that maintaining relationship with them poses a danger to the religious upbringing of others, then, under that condition, severing relationship with them is more appropriate.

2. Promoted here are two great qualities of character, good dealings and good manners - of which Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was a mirror. Despite such serious crimes committed by his sons, he kept dealing with them in a manner that they faced no qualms of conscience when they

made their second request to take their younger brother with them.

3. Another instruction inferred from here is that it is appropriate to admonish a wrongdoer in the interest of his betterment. This would amount to telling him that his behavior demanded that the plea made by him should be rejected, but then, he should be given the feeling that he is being given a fresh chance by forgoing what has gone before - so that his sense of shame returns to him later and he becomes totally repentant. This is what Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did in the first instance. He made a caustic reference to their past record: 'Shall I trust you about Benyamin as I had trusted you earlier about Yūsuf ?' But, after having warned them pointedly, he realized their penitence from their apparent condition, placed his trust in Allah and handed over his young son into their custody.

4. Placing one's trust, in the real sense, in the promise or protection of a human being is wrong. The real trust should be in Allah Ta'ālā. He alone is the real mover and maker of things and He alone is the causer of causes. To bring forth causes and to give them effect is what lies but in His control. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said: فَاللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ حٰفِظًا (Well, Allah is the best guardian).

According to a saying of Ka'b al-Aḥbār, since Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, this time, did not simply trust the word of his sons, instead, entrusted the matter with Allah Ta'ālā, therefore, Allah Ta'ālā said: 'By My honour, now I shall send both of your sons back to you.'

5. If some property or thing belonging to someone else is found in our baggage, and strong indications prove that he has tied it up in our baggage with the specific intention of giving it to us, then, keeping it and using it is permissible - as was the case with this 'capital' which came out from the baggage of the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and where strong indications proved that it did not happen as a result of some oversight or forgetfulness, in fact, it was given back intentionally. That is why, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not give instructions that these articles of value be returned. But, in case there is a doubt that it has come to us, perhaps by oversight or forgetfulness, then, using it without making necessary inquiries from the owner is not permissible.

6. No one should be asked to give a pledge on oath, the fulfillment of

which does not lie fully in his control - as it was, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام took a pledge on oath from his sons that they would bring back Benyamin safe and sound, he exempted from it the situation in which they may become totally helpless or become themselves subjected to near-death circumstances.

Therefore, when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم asked the noble Companions رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین to give him a pledge of their obedience to him, then, he himself added a restriction to it, that is, the restriction of ability. Thus, the pledge stipulated: 'we shall obey you fully - as far as it is within our ability and control.'

7. That the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام have been asked to give a pledge that they would bring Benyamin back shows that : كفالة بالنفس (*Kafālah bin-nafs*) is permissible. Being a technical term of Islāmic Law, it means that it is correct to tender a personal bail or guarantee for the due appearance of a person involved in a case on its hearing date in the court.

The view of Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى differs in this respect. According to him, it is only financial guarantee that is allowed in Sharī'ah. He does not hold the personal bail (*Kafālah bin-nafs*) as permissible.

Verses 67 - 69

وَقَالَ يٰبَنِىَّ لَا تَدْخُلُوْا مِنْۢ بَابٍ وَّاحِدٍ وَّادْخُلُوْا مِنْ اَبْوَابٍ مُّتَفَرِّقَةٍؕ
وَمَآ اُغْنِىْ عَنْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَىْءٍؕ اِنِ الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِؕ عَلَيْهِ
تَوَكَّلْتُۚ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا مِنْ حَيْثُ
اَمَرَهُمْ اَبُوْهُمْؕ مَا كَانَ يُغْنِىْ عَنْهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَىْءٍ اِلَّا حَاجَةً فِىْ
نَفْسِ يَعْقُوْبَ قَضٰىهَاؕ وَاِنَّهٗ لَذُوْ عِلْمٍ لِّمَا عَلَّمْنٰهُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ اٰوٰٓى اِلَيْهِ اَخَاهُ قَالَ اِنِّىْٓ اَنَا
اَخُوْكَ فَلَا تَبْتَىِٕسْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾

And he said, "O my sons, do not enter (the city) all of you from the same gate, rather, enter from different gates.

And I cannot help you in any way against (the will of) Allah. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. In Him I place my trust, and in Him should trust those who trust." [67]

And when they entered (the city) in the manner their father had advised them, he could not help them in any way against (the will of) Allah, but it was just an urge in the heart of Ya'qūb which he satisfied. He was a man of knowledge; because We had taught him, but most of the people do not know. [68]

And when they came to Yūsuf, he lodged his brother (Benyamin) with himself. He said, "Behold, I am your brother! So do not grieve for what they have been doing." [69]

Commentary

In the present verses, the second visit of the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, this time accompanied by their younger brother, has been mentioned. On that occasion, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ had told them to keep in mind that they were eleven of them going there, so they should not enter Egypt collectively from one single gate of the city of their destination. Instead of that, once they have reached the outer wall of the city, they should disperse and enter there from different gates.

The reason for this advice was his apprehension that all of them were young and, *māsha'allāh*, healthy, tall, handsome and impressive. He was concerned about them lest people find out that they were sons of the same father, and brothers to each other. May be they are affected by someone's evil eye which may bring them some harm. Or, their coming in all together may make some people envy them, or may even cause some pain to them.

Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ did not give them this advice the first time they went to Egypt. He did so on the occasion of their second trip. The reason for this, perhaps, is that they had entered Egypt on their first visit as common travellers and in a broken down condition. No one knew them, nor was there any danger that someone would take any special notice of their general condition. But, it so happened that, during their very first trip, the master of Egypt gave them an unusual welcome which introduced them to state functionaries and city people. Now there did

exist the danger that someone may cast an evil eye on them, or that some people start envying them for being an imposing group of visitors. Apart from it, the fact that the younger son, Benyamin, was with them this time, became the cause of the father's added attention.

The Effect of the Evil Eye is True

This tells us that human beings affected by the evil eye, or its causing pain or loss to another human being, animal etc., is true. It cannot be dismissed as ignorance, superstition or fancy. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was concerned about it.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also confirmed its truth. It appears in a Ḥadīth: 'The evil eye makes a human being enter the grave, and a camel enter a petty pot.' Therefore, things from which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has sought refuge, and from which he has directed his Ummah to seek refuge, include: مِن كُلِّ عينٍ لامّة that is, 'I seek refuge from the evil eye.' (Qurṭubī)

Well-known is the event related to Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Ḥunayf, one of the noble Companions. It is said that there was an occasion when he took off his shirt to get ready to go for a bath. 'Āmir ibn Rabī'ah happened to cast a glance at the bright tint and healthy look of his body. The spontaneous remark he made was: 'Until this day, I have never seen a body as handsome as this!' No sooner did these words escape his mouth, an instant high temperature seized Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Ḥunayf رضي الله عنه. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was informed about it, the treatment he suggested was that 'Āmir ibn Rabī'ah should make Wuḍū', collect the water from Wuḍū' in some utensil, and let this water be poured on the body of Sahl ibn Ḥunayf. When it was done as ordered, the temperature dropped down immediately. He became fully fit, and left on the expedition he was going with the Holy Prophet ﷺ who, following this event, also gave a gentle warning to 'Āmir ibn Rabī'ah by telling him:

علام يقتل احدكم اخاه، الاّ برّكت، انّ العين حقّ

> 'Why would someone kill his brother? (When you saw his body) you could have made a *du'ā'* for *barakah*. It is true that the evil eye leaves its effect.'

This Ḥadīth also tells us that, should someone notice something un-

usual about the person or property of somebody else, let him make *du'ā'* for him that Allah Ta'ālā blesses him with *barakah* in it. According to some narrations, one should say: مَاشَاءَ اللّٰهُ لَاقُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ (*Māsha' Allāhu lāquwwata illā billāh* : Whatever Allah will - there is no power but with Him). This removes the effect of the evil eye. This also tells us that, should someone become affected by a person's evil eye, the pouring of water used by that person in washing his face, hands and feet (in Wuḍū') will help eliminate the effect of the evil eye.

Al-Qurṭubī has said that there is a consensus of all 'Ulamā' of the Muslim Ummah among *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* on the truth of the evil eye as affecting and causing harm.

Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, on the one hand, because of the apprehension of the evil eye, or envy, advised his sons that they should not enter all together from one single gate of the city. On the other hand, he considered it necessary to speak out about the reality behind it - the heedlessness towards which in such matters would usually cause many from among the masses to fall easy victims to superstition or baseless scruples. The real fact is that the effect of the evil eye over one's person or property is a kind of mesmerism (or an induced state as in hypnosis, though not necessarily in sleep or pre-set clinical conditions). This would be more like a harmful medicine or food which makes one sick; or, excessive heat or cold which make some diseases show up. The effective measures demonstrated by the evil eye or mesmerism are one of the customary causes which would, through the power of the eye or mind, make its effects manifest. The truth is that they themselves have no real effectiveness of their own. Instead, all universal causes operate under the perfect power, will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. No favourable measures taken against what has been Divinely destined can prove beneficial, nor can the harmfulness of some harmful measure become effective. Therefore, it was said:

وَمَآ اُغْنِىْ عَنْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَىْءٍ ۭ اِنِ الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ۭ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ ۚ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ

And I cannot help you in any way against (the will of) Allah. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. In Him I place my trust, and in Him should trust those who trust - 67.

It means: I know that the necessary precautions I have ordered you to take so as to help you remain protected against the evil eye cannot avert the will and intention of Allah Taʿālā. What works here is but the command of Allah. However, one has been asked to do what is physically possible. Therefore, I have given this advice. But, I place my trust, not on these physical arrangements, but in Allah alone. And it is imperative for everyone that he or she should trust in and rely on Him alone - never placing one's trust in physical and material means.

The reality which Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was talking about became all too visible in this trip as well. By chance it so happened that all measures taken to bring Benyamin back home safely just failed and he was detained in Egypt. As a consequence of which, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام received another severe shock. That the measure taken by him failed, as categorically mentioned in the next verse, had a purpose behind it. It means that this measure failed in terms of the essential objective, that is, the safe return of Benyamin back home - though, the measure taken to keep them protected against the evil eye or envy did succeed, because no such incident showed up during this trip. But, the unforeseen incident Divine destiny had in store for them was a factor not noticed by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, nor could he do anything to counter it. However, despite this visible failure, it was the *barakah* (blessing) of his *tawakkul* (trust) that this second shock turned out to be an antidote for the first one, and resulted in the happy reunion with both his sons, Yūsuf and Benyamin, safely and honourably.

This subject has been taken up in the succeeding verse where it is said that the sons carried out the instructions of their father and entered the city from different gates. When they did so, the desire of their father stood fulfilled - though, this measure taken by him could not avert anything already destined by Allah. But, as for the paternal love and concern of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام for his sons, this he did demonstrate to his heart's content.

Towards the end of the verse, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has been praised in the following words: وَإِنَّهُ لَذُو عِلْمٍ لِّمَا عَلَّمْنَٰهُ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (He was a man of knowledge, because We had taught him, but most of the people do not know - 68). It means that his knowledge was not acquired. It did not come from books. Instead, it was directly a Divine gift. Therefore, he did

employ physical means, something legally required, and commendable. But, he did not place his total trust in it. However, the truth is that most of the people do not know the reality behind it. Thus unaware, they would fall in doubts about Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ thinking that the employment of these means did not match the station of a prophet.

Some commentators have said that the first word: علم (*'ilm* : knowledge) means acting in accordance with the dictate of *'ilm* (knowledge). The translation in this case will be: "He was a man of action according to the knowledge We gave him". Therefore, he did not place his trust in material means, in fact, it was Allah alone he relied on and trusted in.'

Onwards from here, it was said in verse 69:

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ اٰوٰى اِلَيْهِ اَخَاهُ قَالَ اِنِّىْٓ اَنَا اَخُوْكَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ

> And when they came to Yūsuf, he lodged his brother [Benyamin] with himself. He said, "Behold, I am your [lost] brother! So do not grieve for what they have been doing.".

According to Tafsīr authority, Qatādah, the arrangement made by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was that two brothers were lodged in one room. This left Benyamin alone. He was asked to stay with him. When alone with him, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ disclosed his identity to his younger brother and told him that he was his real brother, Yūsuf. He comforted him and asked him not to worry about what their brothers have been doing until that time.

Rulings and Points of Guidance

Some injunctions and rulings come out from verses 67 and 68. These are given below:

1. The effect of the evil eye is true. To try to stay safe from it is permissible in Sharī'ah, and is commendable, just as one tries to stay safe from harmful foods and actions.

2. To stay safe from being envied by people, it is correct to conceal from them any special personal blessings and attributes one may have.

3. To employ physical and material means to stay safe from harmful effects is neither against *Tawakkul* (trust in Allah), nor against the stat-

us of prophets.

4. If one person apprehends likely harm or hurt coming to the other person, it is better to let him know about the danger and suggest how to stay safe from it - as done by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام.

5. When someone finds some personal excellence or blessing enjoyed by another person appear unusual to him and there be the danger that he may be affected by the evil eye, then, it becomes obligatory (*wājib*) on the beholder that he should, after noticing it, say: بَارَكَ اللهُ (*bārakallāh* : may Allah bless) or: مَاشَاءَ اللهُ (*māsha'Allāh* : whatever Allah will), so that the other person remains safe from any possible harm.

6. Employing all possible means to stay safe from the evil eye is permissible. One of them is to seek its treatment through a *du'ā'* (prayer) or *ta'wīdh* (spoken or written words seeking the protection of Allah) - as was done by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who, seeing the weakness of the two sons of Sayyidnā Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib, allowed him to have them be treated through *ta'wīdh* etc.

7. The ideal approach of a wise Muslim to whatever he does is that he must place his real trust in Allah Ta'ālā to begin with but, at the same time, he should not ignore physical and material means. Let him not fall short in employing whatever permissible means he can possibly assemble together to achieve his purpose - as was done by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. And the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too has taught us to do so. The Sage Rūmī has expressed this prophetic teaching in the following line: برتوکّل زانوئے اشتربہ بند that is, 'Tie the leg of your camel and trust in Allah'.

This is how prophets place their trust in Allah, and this was the blessed way of our Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم.

8. A question arises here that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام made efforts to call his younger brother, even insisted on it. And when he came, he even disclosed his identity before him. But, he neither thought of calling his father, nor took any steps to inform him about his well-being while in Egypt. The reason for this is the same as described earlier. There is no doubt that he did have many opportunities during those forty years when he could have sent a message to his father about himself. But,

whatever happened in this matter was Divine decree communicated through the medium of *Waḥy* (revelation). Allah Ta'ālā would have not given him the permission to tell his father about himself - because he was yet to be tested once again through his separation from his son, Benyamin. It was to complete this Divine arrangement that all these situations were created.

Verses 70 - 76

فلما جهزهم بجهازهم جعل السقاية في رحل اخيه ثم اذن مؤذن
ايتها العير انكم لسرقون ﴿٧٠﴾ قالوا و اقبلوا عليهم ماذا تفقدون
﴿٧١﴾ قالوا نفقد صواع الملك ولمن جاء به حمل بعير وانا به
زعيم ﴿٧٢﴾ قالوا تالله لقد علمتم ما جئنا لنفسد في الارض وما كنا
سرقين ﴿٧٣﴾ قالوا فما جزاؤه ان كنتم كذبين ﴿٧٤﴾ قالوا جزاؤه
من وجد في رحله فهو جزاؤه كذلك نجزي الظلمين ﴿٧٥﴾ فبدا
باوعيتهم قبل وعاء اخيه ثم استخرجها من وعاء اخيه كذلك
كدنا ليوسف ما كان لياخذ اخاه في دين الملك الا ان يشاء الله
نرفع درجت من نشاء وفوق كل ذي علم عليم ﴿٧٦﴾

Later, when he equipped them with their provisions, he placed the bowl in the camel-pack of his brother. Then, an announcer shouted out, "O people of the caravan, you are thieves." [70] **Turning towards them, they said, "What are you missing?"** [71] **They said, "We are missing the measuring-bowl of the king, and whoever brings it back shall deserve a camel-load, and I stand surety for it."** [72]

They said, "We swear by Allah, you certainly know that we did not come to make mischief in the land, nor have we ever been thieves." [73]

They said, "What is the punishment, if you are liars?" [74] **They said, "It's punishment is that he, in whose baggage it is found, shall himself be the punishment. This is how we punish the wrongdoers."** [75]

So, he started with their bags before the bag of his brother, then, recovered it from the bag of his brother. This is how We planned for Yūsuf. He had no right to take his brother according to the law of the king, unless Allah so willed. We elevate in ranks whomso We will. And above every man who has knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable. [76]

Commentary

The present verses describe how Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ arranged to have his real brother, Benyamin, stay on with him. All brothers were given grains according to rules. The grains for each brother was loaded on his camel, separately and by name.

In the supply of grain loaded on the camel for Benyamin, a bowl was concealed. This bowl has been called: سِقَايَه (*siqāyah*) at one place, and: صُوَاعَ الْمَلِكِ (*suwā' al-malik*) at another. The word: سِقَايَه (*siqāyah*) means a bowl used to drink water from, and: صُوَاع (*suwā'*) too is a utensil similar to it. That it has been attributed to *'malik'* or king shows the additional feature that this bowl had some special value or status. According to some narrations, it was made of a precious stone similar to emerald. Others say that it was made of gold, or silver. However, this bowl hidden in Benyamin's baggage was fairly precious besides having some special connection with the king of Egypt - whether he used it himself, or had it declared to be the official measure of grains.

In the second sentence of verse 70, it is said:

ثُمَّ اَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ اَيَّتُهَا الْعِيْرُ اِنَّكُمْ لَسٰرِقُوْنَ

Then, an announcer shouted out, "O people of the caravan, you are thieves."

Here, the word: ثُمَّ (*thumma* : translated as 'then') shows that this public announcement was not made instantly. Instead, a temporary delay was allowed for the caravan to leave. The announcement was made after that to offset the likelihood of anyone sensing a foul play. After all, this proclaimer identified the caravan of the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf as the thieves.

Verse 71 carries the response of the accused: قَالُوْا وَاَقْبَلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ مَّاذَا تَفْقِدُوْنَ , that is, 'the brothers of Yūsuf turned to the announcer, as if protesting

on being made into thieves, and asked him to say what is it that you seem to have lost.' The answer given by the announcers was:

قَالُوا نَفْقِدُ صُوَاعَ الْمَلِكِ وَلِمَنْ جَآءَ بِهٖ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ وَّاَنَا بِهٖ زَعِيمٌ

> We are missing the measuring- bowl of the king, and whoever brings it back shall deserve a camel-load, and I stand a surety for it.

The question which emerges here is: Why did Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام opt for this excuse to detain Benyamin with him, specially when he knew that his separation was already shocking for his father. Now, how could he bear by giving him another shock by detaining his other brother?

The other question which arises here is far more important because it involves things like accusing innocent brothers of theft and concealing something in their baggage secretly to cause them disgrace later. These are impermissible acts. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was a prophet of Allah. It is difficult to visualize how would he have gone along with them.

Some commentators, such as al-Qurṭubī and others, have stated: When Benyamin recognized Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and was at peace, he requested his brother not to send him back along with his brothers. Instead, he pleaded, he should let him stay with him. First, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام made the excuse that his staying behind will shock their father. Then, he had no way of making him stay with him other than that blame him of theft, arrest him for it and thus keep him with him. Benyamin was so disgusted with the ways of his brothers that he was ready to go through all this.

But, even if this event were taken as correct, the heart-break caused for his father, the disgrace inflicted on all his brothers and dubbing them as thieves cannot become permissible simply because of the pleasure of Benyamin. That some commentators have interpreted the charge of theft levelled on them by the announcer as being without the knowledge and permission of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is not valid. This is a claim without any proof and, given the anatomy of the event, incoherent too. Similar is the case of another interpretation where it has been stated that these brothers stole Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from his father, and sold him, therefore, they were called 'thieves.' This too is a long-drawn explanation.

Therefore, the correct answer to these questions is what has been given by al-Qurṭubī and Maẓharī. They have said: Whatever has been done and said in this connection was neither the outcome of Benyamin's wish, nor that of the initiative of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ himself. Instead of all that, all these happenings were the manifestation of the infinite wisdom of Allah alone under whose command they came to be what they were and being completed through them was the process of the trial and test of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ. A hint towards this answer appears in this verse (76) of the Qur'ān itself which says: كَذٰلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوْسُفَ : 'This is how We planned for Yūsuf (to detain his brother).'

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has very clearly attributed this excuse and plan to Himself. So, when all these things took shape as Divinely commanded, calling them impermissible becomes meaningless. They would be like the incident of the dismantling of the boat and the killing of the boy in the event relating to Sayyidnā Mūsā and Al-Khaḍir عليهم السلام. Obviously, these were sins, therefore, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام registered his disapproval of them. But, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was doing all this with Divine assent and permission under particularly expedient considerations, therefore, he was not committing any sin.

In verse 73, it was said: قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَّا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا سٰرِقِيْنَ , that is, when the royal announcer accused the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf of theft, they said that responsible people of the state know them and know that they had not come to create any disorder in the country, nor have they ever been thieves.

In verse 74, it was said: قَالُوْا فَمَا جَزَآؤُهٗٓ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ كٰذِبِيْنَ , that is, the royal staff said to them: If it stood proved that they were liars, what do they suggest should be the punishment for the theft? The answer given was: قَالُوْا جَزَآؤُهٗ مَنْ وُّجِدَ فِىْ رَحْلِهٖ فَهُوَ جَزَآؤُهٗ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ , that is, the brothers of Yūsuf said: 'It's punishment is that he, in whose baggage it is found, shall himself be the punishment. This is how we punish the wrongdoers.'

The sense of the statement is that the punishment for theft in the Sharī'ah of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ allowed the person whose property had been stolen to take the thief as his slave. Thus, the state functionaries made the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf to tell them the punishment of a thief as in Jacobian law and thereby had them committed to hand over

Benyamin to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ according to their own decision following the recovery of the stolen goods from Benyamin's baggage.

Said in verse 75 was: فَبَدَاَ بِاَوْعِيَتِهِمْ قَبْلَ وِعَآءِ اَخِيْهِ , that is, to cover up the real plan, the state officials first searched through the baggage of all brothers. They did not open Benyamin's baggage first lest that causes any doubts.

Then, as said in the first sentence of the next verse (76): ثُمَّ اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ وِّعَآءِ اَخِيْهِ , Benyamin's baggage was opened up last of all and recovered from it was the 'bowl of the king.' At that sight, all brothers were put to shame. They started chiding Benyamin for having disgraced them.

After that, it was said: كَذٰلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوْسُفَ ط مَا كَانَ لِيَاْخُذَ اَخَاهُ فِىْ دِيْنِ الْمَلِكِ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ , that is, 'this is how We planned for Yūsuf.' He could have not arrested his brother under the Egyptian Imperial Law because, according to their law of theft, there was a corporal punishment for the thief after which he was to be released against the payment of twice the cost of the stolen property. But, here, he had already found out the law of theft operative in the Shari'ah of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ. According to this law, detaining Benyamin with him became correct and valid. So, also granted through the wisdom and will of Allah Ta'ālā was this wish of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ.

Said in the last sentence of the verse is: نَرْفَعُ دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَآءُ ط وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِىْ عِلْمٍ عَلِيْمٌ (We elevate in ranks whomso We will [as, in this event, the ranks of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ were elevated over his brothers]. And above every man who has knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable).

It means that Allah has given precedence to some over others in terms of knowledge. Take the highest of the high in knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable than him. And if there is someone with a knowledge which is superior to the knowledge of the best among the creation of Allah, then, we have the *'Ilm* of Allah *jalla thanā'uh* which is the highest of all for ever.

Rulings and points of guidance

Some injunctions and rulings deduced from the present verses are given below:

1. The statement: وَلِمَنْ جَآءَ بِهٖ حِمْلُ بَعِيْرٍ (and whoever brings it back shall

deserve a camel-load) in verse 72 proves that it is valid to make a general announcement that a particular award or remuneration will be paid to anyone who performs a particular act. This is very much like the current custom of announcing rewards for the arrest of absconding criminals or for the return of lost properties. Though, this form of transaction does not fall under the juristic definition of *Ijārah* (hiring), but, in the light of this verse, the justification for this also stands proved. (Qurṭubī)

2. The words: أَنَا بِهٖ زَعِيمٌ (and I stand surety for it) appearing at the end of verse 72 tell us that one person can become the guarantor of financial rights on behalf of another person. The related ruling, according to the majority of Muslim jurists, provides that the creditor has the authority to recover his property from the person legally in debt, or from the guarantor, as he chooses. However, if it is recovered from the guarantor, the guarantor would have the right to recover from the person legally in debt whatever cash or property has been taken from him. (Qurṭubī)

3. The sentence: كَذٰلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوْسُفَ (This is how We planned for Yūsuf) in verse 76 tells us that it is permissible, for a valid reason recognized by Sharī'ah, to change the form of a transaction in a way that it brings a change in its legal status. According to the terminology of the *fuqahā'* (jurists) it is called 'Ḥīlah Shar'iyyah' (i.e. a lawful device to avoid a real hardship). However, the condition is that such an action should not cause the invalidation of the injunctions of the Sharī'ah. If so, all such devices are, by the consensus of Muslim jurists, Ḥarām and unlawful - for example, finding an excuse to avoid paying Zakāh, or to embark on an unnecessary journey before or during Ramaḍān simply to seek an excuse for not fasting. This is universally Ḥarām. The hunt for such excuses and devices has brought Divine punishment on some nations, and the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has prohibited the use of such stratagems. The entire Muslim Ummah agrees that they are Ḥarām, forbidden and unlawful. Acting upon them does not go on to make whatever is done as permissible. In fact, what falls on the doer is a two-fold sin - firstly, that of the original impermissible act; secondly, that of the impermissible device which amounts, in a way, to cheating Allah and His Rasūl. That all such *ḥiyal* or strategems are impermissible has been proved by Imām Al-Bukhārī in his Kitāb al-Ḥiyal.

Verses 77 - 82

قَالُوْٓا اِنْ يَّسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ اَخٌ لَّهٗ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ فَاَسَرَّهَا يُوْسُفُ فِيْ نَفْسِهٖ
وَلَمْ يُبْدِهَا لَهُمْ ۚ قَالَ اَنْتُمْ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا ۚ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُوْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾
قَالُوْا يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْعَزِيْزُ اِنَّ لَهٗٓ اَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيْرًا فَخُذْ اَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهٗ ۚ اِنَّا
نَرٰىكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٧٨﴾ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ اَنْ نَّاْخُذَ اِلَّا مَنْ وَّجَدْنَا
مَتَاعَنَا عِنْدَهٗٓ ۙ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْئَسُوْا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوْا
نَجِيًّا ۗ قَالَ كَبِيْرُهُمْ اَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اَبَاكُمْ قَدْ اَخَذَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَّوْثِقًا مِّنَ
اللّٰهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ مَا فَرَّطْتُّمْ فِيْ يُوْسُفَ ۚ فَلَنْ اَبْرَحَ الْاَرْضَ حَتّٰى يَاْذَنَ
لِيْٓ اَبِيْٓ اَوْ يَحْكُمَ اللّٰهُ لِيْ ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحٰكِمِيْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ اِرْجِعُوْٓا اِلٰٓى
اَبِيْكُمْ فَقُوْلُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَآ اِنَّ ابْنَكَ سَرَقَ ۚ وَمَا شَهِدْنَآ اِلَّا بِمَا عَلِمْنَا وَمَا
كُنَّا لِلْغَيْبِ حٰفِظِيْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَسْئَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِيْ كُنَّا فِيْهَا وَالْعِيْرَ الَّتِيْٓ
اَقْبَلْنَا فِيْهَا ۗ وَاِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾

They said, "If he commits theft, then, a brother of his has committed theft before." So Yūsuf kept it (his reaction) to himself and did not reveal it to them. He said, "You are even worse in position. And Allah knows best of what you allege." [77] **They said, "O 'Azīz, he has a father, a very old man. So, take one of us in his place. We see you are a generous man."** [78] **He said, "God forbid that we keep anyone except the one with whom we have found our thing, otherwise we shall be unjust."** [79]

So when they lost hope in him, they went aside for consultation. The oldest of them said, "Do you not know that your father has taken pledge from you in the name of Allah, while you had defaulted earlier in the case of Yūsuf. So, I shall never leave this land unless my father permits me or Allah decides about me. And He is the best of all judges. [80] **Go back to your father and say, 'Our father, your son has committed theft, and we do not testify except what we know, and we could not guard against the unseen.** [81] **And ask (the people of) the town**

in which we have been and the caravan with which we have come, and surely we are truthful." [82]

Commentary

It was stated in the previous verses that, while in Egypt, a royal bowl was concealed in the baggage of Benyamin, the younger brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Then, by recovering it as planned, a charge of theft was levelled against him.

As in the first of the verses cited above, when the stolen property was recovered from Benyamin's baggage before the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, they were so ashamed that they said in irritation: إِنْ يَسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ أَخٌ لَّهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ, that is, if he has committed a theft, it is not much of a surprise, for he had a brother who, like him, had committed a theft before. The sense was that he was not their real brother. He was their step brother. And he had a real brother who had also committed a theft.

On this occasion, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام accused him too of a theft, which refers to an event which took place during his childhood when the way a conspiracy was hatched here to blame Benyamin for theft, a similar conspiracy was staged against Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام at that time with him being totally unaware of it. As for his brothers, they were fully aware of the fact that he was totally free from this blame. But, being angry with Benyamin on this occasion, they have made out that event too as of theft and have put its blame on his brother, Yūsuf.

What was that event? Reports differ about it. Referring to Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq and Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, Ibn Kathīr has reported that soon after the birth of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, Benyamin was born. This birth of his became the cause of his mother's death. When both Yūsuf and Benyamin were left without their mother, they were raised by their paternal aunt. Allah Ta'ālā had blessed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from his very childhood with such an attractive personality that whoever saw him became deeply attached to him. His paternal aunt was no exception. She would not let him disappear from her sight at any time. On the other hand, no different was the condition of his father who was very fond of him. But, being a minor child, it was necessary that he be kept under the care of a woman. Therefore, he was put under the care of his

paternal aunt. When he had learnt how to walk, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ thought of having him come to live with him. When he talked to his paternal aunt, she showed her reluctance to let him go. After that, having been under compulsion, she somehow handed Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ over to his father, but she did make a plan to take him back. She had an antique waist-band which had come to her as the legacy of Sayyidna Isḥāq ﷺ and was highly valued. Sayyidna Yūsuf's paternal aunt tied this band on his waist underneath his dress.

After he had gone, she spread the news around that her waist-band has been stolen by someone. When searched for, it turned out to be with young Yūsuf. According to the Sharī'ah of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ, the paternal aunt now had the right to keep him as her slave. When Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ saw that the paternal aunt has become the owner of Yūsuf on the authority of the religious law of the land, he handed young Yūsuf over to her. Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ kept living with her as long as she was alive.

This was the event in which the blame of theft was imputed to Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ following which the truth came to light and everybody found that he was free of even the least doubt of theft. It was the love of his paternal aunt for him that had made her conspire to keep him. The brothers knew this truth all too well. Given this reason, it did not behove them that they would attribute theft to him. But, of the series of excesses inflicted on Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ by his brothers, this too was the last.

Now in the second sentence of the first verse (77) it was said: فَأَسَرَّهَا يُوسُفُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَلَمْ يُبْدِهَا لَهُمْ that is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ heard what his brothers had to say and kept it in his heart for they still seemed to be after him and were now blaming him for theft. But, he kept his reaction to himself and did not let his brothers know that he had heard what they had said and was affected by it in any way.

Said in the next and last sentence of the verse was: قَالَ أَنتُمْ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا ۖ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُونَ , that is, 'Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ said (in his heart): 'You are even worse in position (as you accuse your brother of theft, falsely and knowingly). And Allah knows best of what you allege (whether what you are saying is true or false).' The first sentence has been uttered in the heart. The other sentence may possibly have been said publicly as his re-

sponse to what his brothers had said.

In verse 78, it was said: قَالُوا يٰأَيُّهَا الْعَزِيْزُ اِنَّ لَهٗٓ اَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيْرًا فَخُذْ اَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهٗ ۚ اِنَّا نَرٰىكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ It means when the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام realized that nothing seems to be working here and they have no option left but to leave Benyamin behind, they started flattering the 'Azīz of Miṣr. They told him that Benyamin's father was very old and weak (his separation will be unbearable for him). Therefore, they requested him that he should detain anyone from among them, in lieu of him. They also told him that they were making that request to him in the hope that he, as they feel, appears to be a very generous person - or, he has been generous to them earlier too.

The response of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام appears in verse 79 as: قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللّٰهِ اَنْ نَّاْخُذَ اِلَّا مَنْ وَّجَدْنَا مَتَاعَنَا عِنْدَهٗٓ ۙ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّظٰلِمُوْنَ that is, he gave his reply to their request according to the regulations followed in his country by telling them that they were not authorized to detain anyone they wished. In fact, if they were to arrest someone other than the person from whose possession the lost property has been recovered, then, according to their own *fatwā* and ruling, they would be accused of being unjust.

The reason he gave was that they had themselves said that 'he, in whose baggage the stolen property is found, shall himself be the punishment.'

In verse 80, it was said: فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْئَسُوْا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوْا نَجِيًّا (So when they lost hope in him, they went aside for consultation).

After that, the primary statement of the oldest brother which begins with the words: قَالَ كَبِيْرُهُمْ (The oldest of them said) is continued till the end of verse 80. The statement was: "Do you not know that your father had taken pledge from you in the name of Allah, while you had defaulted earlier in the case of Yūsuf. So, I shall never leave this land unless my father permits me (to return) or Allah decides about me. And He is the best of all judges."

This is the statement of the oldest brother. Some commentators identify him as being Yahūda (Judah) - and he was, though not the oldest in age, but was certainly the eldest in knowledge and merit. Other commentators say that he is Ruebel (Rueben) who is the oldest in age and he

was the one who had suggested that Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ should not be killed. Still others have said that this oldest brother was Sham'ūn who was known to be the eldest in power and rank.

Then, in verse 81, it was said: إِرْجِعُوْٓا إِلَىٰٓ أَبِيْكُمْ, that is, the oldest brother said: I am going to stay here. You all go back to your father and tell him that his son has committed a theft, and that whatever we are saying is what we have seen with our own eyes, and that the stolen property was recovered from his baggage before us.

As for the last sentence of verse 81: وَمَا كُنَّا لِلْغَيْبِ حٰفِظِيْنَ (and we could not guard against the unseen), it means that 'the pledge we had given to you to bring back Benyamin definitely was given in terms of outwardly visible circumstances. We did not know what we did not see and control - thus how could we know that he would steal and be arrested for it leaving us helpless in this matter.' The sentence could also mean that 'we did our best to keep Benyamin protected seeing that he does nothing which would put him in trouble. But, this effort of ours could be within the limits of our outwardly visible circumstances. That this thing would happen to him, in absence of our vigilance and knowledge, was something we did not know about.'

Since the brothers of Yūsuf had deceived their father earlier, and knew that their father would never be satisfied with their statement mentioned above, and he would never believe in what they would tell him, therefore, for additional emphasis, they said: '(and if you do not believe us), you can check with the people of the town in which we have been (that is, the city in Egypt). And you can also check with the caravan which has come from Egypt to Can'aan with us. And we are true in what we are saying.'

At this point, the question - why would Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ bear by such a heartless treatment with his father - reappears in Tafsīr Maẓharī. This question has also been taken up earlier in our comments on this Sūrah where it has been said that it was surprising that Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ did not tell his father about himself, then detained his brother too, then his brothers made repeated visits to Egypt and he never told them about himself nor sent some message to his father. Tafsīr Maẓharī answers all these doubts by saying:

إِنَّهٗ عَمِلَ ذٰلِكَ بِاَمْرِ اللّٰهِ تَعَالٰى لِيَزِيْدَ فِىْ بَلَآءِ يَعْقُوْبَ

That is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ did that with the command of Allah Ta'ālā so that (the cycle of) the test and trial of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ reaches its completion.

Rules and Principles

1. The statement: وَمَا شَهِدْنَآ اِلَّا بِمَا عَلِمْنَا (and we do not testify except what we know) appearing in verse 82 proves that human transactions and contracts are based on apparently known circumstances. They do not cover things which no one knows. The pledge to protect Benyamin which the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ had given to their father was related to things which were in their control. As for the incident that he was accused of theft and arrested for it, it was a different matter which does not affect the pledge as such.

2. Deduced from the same verse, there is another ruling which appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī. It says: This sentence proves that testimony depends on knowledge. No matter how this knowledge is acquired, testimony can be given in accordance with it. Therefore, the way an event can be testified by having seen it with one's own eyes, similarly, it can be testified by having heard it from someone reliable and worthy of trust - subject to the condition that he does not conceal the truth of the matter, instead, states plainly that he has not seen it personally but has heard it from such and such reliable person. It is on the basis of this principle that Mālikī jurists have ruled the testimony of a blind person as permissible.

3. The present verses also prove that should a person be true, right and proper, but the situation is such that others may suspect him to be otherwise, then, he must remove that shadow of doubt so that those who see him do not fall into the sin of (unwarranted) suspicion - as in this event relating to Benyamin, there came up an occasion of accusation and doubt because of a past event in the life of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ. Therefore, in order to make things clear, the testimony of the people of the city, and the caravan, was presented in support.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, by his personal conduct, affirmed it positively. On his way back from his Masjid, when he was going through an alley with Ummul-Mu'minīn, Sayyidah Ṣafiyyah رضي الله عنها,

he noticed two persons appearing at the head of the alley. They were still at some distance, but the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم told them that he was with Ṣafiyyah bint Ḥuyayy. They said: Yā Rasūl Allah, can anyone have any suspicion about you? Then, he said: Yes, the Shayṭān keeps seeping through the human body, may be it drops a doubt in somebody's heart. (Al-Bukhārī and Muslim) [Qurṭubī]

Verses 83 - 87

قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ اَنْفُسُكُمْ اَمْرًا ؕ فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيْلٌ ؕ عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ
يَّاْتِيَنِىْ بِهِمْ جَمِيْعًا ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَالْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَ قَالَ
يٰۤاَسَفٰى عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ وَابْيَضَّتْ عَيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيْمٌ ﴿٨٤﴾
قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ تَفْتَؤُا تَذْكُرُ يُوْسُفَ حَتّٰى تَكُوْنَ حَرَضًا اَوْتَكُوْنَ مِنَ
الْهٰلِكِيْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ قَالَ اِنَّمَاۤ اَشْكُوْا بَثِّىْ وَحُزْنِىْۤ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَ اَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ
مَالاَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ يٰبَنِىَّ اذْهَبُوْا فَتَحَسَّسُوْا مِنْ يُّوْسُفَ وَاَخِيْهِ وَلاَ
تَايْئَسُوْا مِنْ رَّوْحِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لاَ يَايْئَسُ مِنْ رَّوْحِ اللّٰهِ اِلاَّ الْقَوْمُ
الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾

He (Ya'qūb) said, "Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best. Hopefully, Allah may bring them all together. Surely, He is the All-Knowing, All-Wise." [83]

And he turned away from them and said, "How sad I am about Yūsuf" and his eyes turned white with sorrow and he was suppressing (his anger and grief). [84] **They said, "By God, you will not stop remembering Yūsuf until you collapse or perish."** [85] **He said, "I complain of my anguish and sorrow to none but Allah, and I know from Allah what you do not know.** [86] **O my sons, go and search for Yūsuf and his brother, and do not lose hope in the mercy of Allah. In fact, only the infidels lose hope in the mercy of Allah."** [87]

Commentary

After the detention of young Benyamin in Egypt, his brothers re-

turned home and told Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام about what had happened there. They tried to assure him that they were telling the truth which can be confirmed from the people in Egypt, as well as, from the caravan they came with from Egypt to Can'aan. From the later, he could also ascertain that Benyamin's theft was apprehended and he was arrested for it. Since Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام knew that they had lied to him earlier in the case of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, therefore, he could not believe them this time too - though, in fact, this time they had told him no lie. And therefore, on this occasion as well, he said the same thing he had said at the time of the disappearance of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ اَنْفُسُكُمْ اَمْرًا فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيْلٌ ("Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best), that is, this statement of yours is not correct. You have made it up yourself. But, even now, it is patience I choose to observe. Only that would be the best for me.'

From this Al-Qurṭubī has deduced: In whatever a Mujtahid says with his Ijtihād, there can be an error as well, so much so that it is possible that a prophet too, when he says something on the basis of his own Ijtihād, could make an error - though, only initially. This is what happened in this case when he declared the truth of his sons to be a lie. But, prophets have a special status and a personal exclusivity on the basis of which they are alerted over the mistake by the will of Allah, and removed away from it, and finally they find truth.

Here, it is also possible that by his comment about 'manuvering something' mentioned above Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام intended to refer to what was made up in Egypt whereby Benyamin was arrested under a false charge of theft only to achieve a particular purpose, and the ultimate result of which was to unfold later in a better form. There may, as well, be a hint toward it in the next sentence of this verse where it is said: عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَنِىْ بِهِمْ جَمِيْعًا (Hopefully, Allah may bring them all together).

In short, the outcome of the refusal of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام to accept the statement of his sons this time was that there was no theft really, nor was Benyamin arrested, and the truth of the matter was to be found elsewhere. This was true in its place. But, whatever was said by his sons, as they knew it, was not wrong either.

Said in verse 84 was: وَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَ قَالَ يٰاَسَفٰى عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ وَابْيَضَّتْ عَيْنٰهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ

كَظِيْمٌ : 'And he turned away from them and said, "How sad I am about Yusuf" and his eyes turned white with sorrow and he was suppressing (his anger and grief).' It means that, after this second shock, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام closed this chapter of talking to his sons about this matter, and turned to his Lord with his plaint before Him as to how sad he was about Yūsuf. What happened was that this constant crying at his separation from Yusuf caused his eyes to turn white from sorrow. The sense is that he lost his eyesight, or it became very weak. Tafsīr authority, Muqātil has said that this state of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام continued for six years when his eyesight had nearly gone. In the last sentence of the verse, it was said: فَهُوَ كَظِيْمٌ which can be explained by saying that he became silent, speechless, unable to share his pain with anyone else. The word: كَظِيْمٌ (*kaẓīm*) has been derived from: كَظْم (*kaẓm*) which means to be choked up or filled. Thus, the sense would be that his heart was all filled up with sorrow and his tongue was tied for he would not talk about his grief to anyone.

Therefore, the word: كَظْم (*kaẓm*) is also taken in the sense of suppressing anger - in a way that anger, despite having one's heart filled with it, does not become the motivating factor of doing something, by word of mouth or movement of hand, as demanded by one's anger. It appears in Ḥadīth:

وَمَنْ يَّكْظِمِ الْغَيْظَ يَأْجُرْهُ اللّٰهُ

> That is, 'whoever suppresses his anger (and does not act as it demands despite having the ability to do so), Allah will reward him.'

It is said in another Ḥadīth that, on the day of Resurrection (Al-Ḥashr), Allah Ta'ālā will bring such people before the whole multitude of people and would give them the option to take whichever of the blessings of Jannah (Paradise) they liked.

At this point, Imām Ibn Jarīr has reported a Ḥadīth according to which, at a time of distress, reciting or prompting to recite: اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّآ اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُوْنَ (*Innā lil-lāhi wa innā ilaihi rāji'ūn* : To Allah we belong and to Him we are to return) is one of the distinguishing characteristics of this Ummah, and this Kalīmah is highly effective in delivering one from the suffering of sorrow. We can understand why it has been called the distin-

guishing characteristic of the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ since Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, when choked with deadly sorrow and shock, did not say this Kalīmah, instead, he said: يٰاَسَفٰى عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ (How sad I am about Yūsuf). In his Shu'abul-'Īmān, Al-Baihaqī has also reported this Ḥadīth as based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه.

Why Was Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام So Deeply Attached To Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام ?

At this stage, we notice that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had extraordinary love for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He was so affected by his disappearance that, during this whole period of his separation from him which has been reported to be forty years in some narrations while eighty in some others, he kept weeping continuously, so much so that he lost his eyesight. Apparently, this does not measure upto his spiritual majesty as a prophet that he would love his children so much and that much. On the other hand, the Holy Qur'ān says: اِنَّمَآ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَاَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ :'Your wealth and your children are a *fitnah* (trial) - 64:15.' And, as for the spiritual majesty of the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, the Holy Qur'ān has this to say: اِنَّآ اَخْلَصْنٰهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ : that is, 'We have made them special to specialize in the remembrance of the Home (of 'Ākhirah) - 38:46.' Mālik ibn Dīnār رحمه الله تعالى explains its meaning by saying that: We have taken out the love of *dunyā* from their hearts and, in its place, We have filled their hearts with nothing but the love of Ākhirah. Their only criterion, in taking or leaving something, is Ākhirah.

From the sum-total of what has been said here, there rises a difficulty before us as to how could Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام allow himself to be so consumed with his love for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and how could that be explained as correct.

In his Tafsīr (Maẓharī), Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānipatī رحمه الله تعالى has, with reference to this difficulty, reported a special research of Ḥaḍrat Mujaddid Alf Thānī, the gist of which is that, no doubt, the love of *dunyā* and its enjoyment is blameworthy. Categorical statements of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth prove that. But, the love of things of *dunyā* which relate to 'Ākhirah is, in reality, included under the love of 'Ākhirah. The excellences of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were not limited to his physical beauty alone. Also to be taken into account are his prophetic chastity and high morals. So, given an over-all view, love for him was not the love of what wordly life

has to offer. In fact and in reality, this was nothing but the love for 'Ākhirah itself.

In the comment quoted above, it is worth noticing that this love, though not the love of *dunyā* really, yet it did have a certain worldly touch. For this reason, this love became the source of the trial and test of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, for which he had to undergo the unbearable shock of a forty-year separation from him. Then, the chains of this event, from the beginning to the end, show that things kept taking shape as determined by Allah Ta'ālā which made this shock stretch longer and longer. Otherwise, at the very start of the event, it would have not been possible for a father who loved his son so intensely that he would simply listen to what his other sons told him and elect to keep sitting home and not do anything about it. In fact, if he had immediately visited the site of the incident and made necessary inquiries and investigations, he would have known the truth of the matter on the spot. But, things happened in a way as Allah would have them, so it just did not occur to him. After that, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was stopped, through revelation, from sending to his father any news about himself - to the limit that he took no initiative in this direction even after his ascension to power in Egypt. Then, more trying were events which happened concerning the repeated visits of his brothers to Egypt. Even at that time, he said nothing to his brothers about himself, nor did he try to send some note of information to his father. Instead of doing all that, he detained yet another brother through a secret plan, thus inflicting yet another shock on his father. All these actions cannot possibly issue forth from a great prophet such as Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام unless and until he had not been prohibited from doing so through the medium of Waḥy (revelation). Therefore, al-Qurṭubī and other commentators have declared this entire range of actions taken by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام as directly prompted by Divine revelation. The Qur'ānic statement: كَذٰلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ (This is how We planned for Yūsuf - 76) also indicates in this directon. Allah knows best.

When the sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام saw the extreme suffering and patience of their father, they said: قَالُوا تَاللّٰهِ تَفْتَؤُا تَذْكُرُ يُوسُفَ (By God, you will not stop remembering Yūsuf ...), meaning thereby that every shock ends, after all, and so does every sorrow. The passage of days in life makes one forget them. But, he continues to be where he was, even after

the passage of such a long time with his sorrow being as fresh as when it came.

After hearing the concern of his sons, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb said: إِنَّمَآ أَشْكُوا بَثِّي وَحُزْنِيٓ إِلَى اللّٰهِ , that is, 'I complain of my anguish and sorrow, not to you, or to anyone else, but to Allah *jalla thana'uh* Himself. Therefore, leave me alone as I am.' And, along with what he said, he also indicated that 'this remembrance of his will not go to waste for he knew from Allah Ta'ālā what they did not know - that he has been promised by Him that He would bring them all together with him.'

Verse 87 begins with the order given by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام: يٰبَنِيَّ اذْهَبُوا فَتَحَسَّسُوا مِن يُّوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ (O my sons, go and search for Yūsuf and his brother ...).

It was after the passage of such a long time that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام asked his sons to 'go and search for Yūsuf and his brother' - and not to lose hope in finding them. Before this, he had never given an order of this nature. All these things were subservient to the Divine destiny. Meeting them earlier than that was not so destined. Therefore, no such action was taken either. And now, the time to meet had arrived. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā put in his heart the way-out appropriate to it.

And the direction in which the search was to be made was turned towards nowhere but Egypt itself - which was known and definite in the case of Benyamin. But, there was no obvious reason, given the outward conditions, to look for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in Egypt. But, when Allah Ta'ālā intends to do something, He arranges to put together appropriate causes for its execution. Therefore, this time, he instructed his sons to go to Egypt once again for the purpose of this search. Some commentators have said that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, by noticing that the 'Azīz of Miṣr had treated them unusually the first time when he had returned their capital by putting it within their baggage, had got the idea that this 'Azīz seems to be someone very noble and generous, perhaps he may be Yūsuf himself.

Points of Guidance

Patience in Pain is Obligatory on Every Muslim

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has said: The event relating to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb

عليه السلام proves that it is Wājib on every Muslim when faced with distress or pain in the case of his person, children, family or property that he or she should seek redress from it by resorting to patience (*ṣabr*) at its best and by becoming resigned to and content with the decree of Allah Taʻālā - and follow the example of Sayyidnā Yaʻqūb عليه السلام and other blessed prophets.

The Merit of Swallowing Anger and Pain

Imām Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى has said: Out of what one swallows, two are the best in the sight of Allah Taʻālā: (1) To do Ṣabr on pain or distress, and (2) to swallow anger.

Complaining of pain before everyone

In another Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: مَنْ بَثَّ لَمْ يَصْبِرْ , that is, one who goes about narrating his distress before everyone has not observed Ṣabr.

The Reward for Ṣabr

Sayyidnā Ibn ʻAbbās رضي الله عنه has said: Allah Taʻālā conferred upon Sayyidnā Yaʻqūb عليه السلام the reward of Shuhadā' (martyrs in the way of Allah) for this Ṣabr. And, in this Ummah too, whoever observes Ṣabr while in distress shall receive a similar reward.

The Reason why Sayyidnā Yaʻqūb عليه السلام was put to Trial

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has given a reason for this severe trial and test of Sayyidnā Yaʻqūb عليه السلام as it appears in some narrations. It is said that one day Sayyidnā Yaʻqūb عليه السلام was doing his Tahajjud prayers and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was sleeping before him. All of a sudden a sound of snoring by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام caused his attention to be diverted to him. This happened twice, and thrice. Then, Allah Taʻālā said to His angels: Look, this is My friend, and My favoured servant, see how he, in the middle of his address and approach to Me, turns his attention to someone other than Me. By My Honour and Power, I shall take these two eyes of his out, the eyes with which he has turned his attention to someone other than Me, and the one to whom he has turned his attention, I shall separate from him for a long time.

How About Looking at Someone During Ṣalāh?

Therefore, in a Ḥadīth of Al-Bukhārī narrated by Sayyidah ʻĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها, it appears that she asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'How is it to look else-

where during Ṣalāh?' In reply, he said: 'Through it, the Shayṭān snatches the Ṣalāh of a servant of Allah away from him.' May Allah *subḥanahū wa Ta'ālā* keep us protected.

Verses 88 - 92

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوْا يٰۤاَيُّهَا الْعَزِيْزُ مَسَّنَا وَاَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ
مُّزْجٰىةٍ فَاَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَجْزِى الْمُتَصَدِّقِيْنَ
﴿٨٨﴾ قَالَ هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَّا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيُوْسُفَ وَاَخِيْهِ اِذْ اَنْتُمْ جٰهِلُوْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾
قَالُوْۤا ءَاِنَّكَ لَاَنْتَ يُوْسُفُ ؕ قَالَ اَنَا يُوْسُفُ وَهٰذَاۤ اَخِىْ ز قَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ
عَلَيْنَا ؕ اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾
قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ اٰثَرَكَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا وَاِنْ كُنَّا لَخٰطِـِٕيْنَ ﴿٩١﴾ قَالَ لَا تَثْرِيْبَ
عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ ؕ يَغْفِرُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ز وَهُوَ اَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾

So, when they came to him (Yūsuf), they said, "O 'Azīz, distress has befallen us and our family, and we have brought a capital of very little worth. So, give us the full measure and be charitable to us. Surely, Allah rewards the charitable." [88] **He said, "Do you know what you did to Yūsuf and his brother when you acted ignorant?"** [89]

They said, "Are you really the Yūsuf?" He said, "I am Yūsuf, and this is my brother. Allah has been very kind to us. Surely, whoever fears Allah and observes patience, then Allah does not waste the reward of the good-doers." [90]

They said, "By God, Allah has given to you preference over us, and we were surely in error." [91]

He said, "No reproach upon you today. May Allah forgive you, and He is the most merciful of all the merciful. [92]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses appearing above is the remaining part of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and his brothers. It tells us that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام asked his sons to go and search Yūsuf and his brother. So they travelled to Egypt for a third time - because they knew that Benya-

min was there and they had to try to get him released first. As for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, though his presence in Egypt was not known to them but, when the time comes for something to happen, human plans too start falling in place, unconsciously and without an intentional effort. This is confirmed by a Ḥadīth which says: When Allah Taʿālā intends to do something, He makes its causes get together automatically. Therefore, to search Yūsuf too, the very travel to Egypt was appropriate, though taken up unconsciously. Then, they needed foodgrains, after all. And yet another factor was that they hoped to see the 'Azīz of Miṣr on the pretext of their request for foodgrains, when they could put forward their plea for the release of Benyamin.

The first verse (88) begins with the words: فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا (And when they came to him, they said...). It means: When the brothers of Yūsuf reached Egypt as ordered by their father and met the 'Azīz of Miṣr, they talked to him in a flattering tone. Presenting their need and helplessness, they told the 'Azīz that they and their family were suffering because of the famine, so much so that they did not have even adequate funds to purchase foodgrains. Compelled by circumstance, they had brought a capital which was not good enough for that purpose. Thus, their request was that, given his generosity, he should accept whatever they had and give them the full measure of grains as is usually given against things of good value. Not being their right in any way, they pleaded that the grains should be given to them as if given in charity because 'Allah rewards the charitable.'

What was this 'capital of very little worth'? The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth have not clarified it. The sayings of the commentators differ. Some say that they were bad *dirhams* which were not acceptable in the open market. Others say that this comprised of household articles. This expression - 'capital of very little worth' - is a translation of the meaning of the word: مُزجٰة ('*muzjātin*') which really means something which does not move on its own, but has to be moved by someone else forcefully.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام heard these submissive words from his brothers and saw their broken-down condition, he was naturally coming to a point where he would have no option but to disclose the truth as it was. And the drift of events was showing that the restriction placed by Allah Taʿālā on Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that he would not disclose the truth

of the matter about himself was not going to be there anymore for the time had come close when it would be taken back. Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, it has been reported in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Maẓharī that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had, on this occasion, sent a letter in writing and had addressed it to the 'Azīz of Miṣr. The letter said:

"From Ya'qūb Ṣafī Allah Ibn Isḥāq Dhabīḥ Allah Ibn Ibrāhīm Khalīl Allah To the 'Azīz of Miṣr. After offering praise to Allah: Our entire family is known for hardships and trials. My grandfather, Ibrāhīm Khalīl Allah was tested through the fire of Nimrud. Then, my father, Isḥāq was put to a hard test. Then, I was tested through a son of mine whom I held very dear - to the limit that I lost my eyesight when separated from him. After that, there was his younger brother, a source of comfort for me in my grief, whom you arrested on a charge of theft. And let me tell you that we are the progeny of prophets. Never have we committed a theft, nor has there ever been a thief among our children. And peace on you!"

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام read this letter, he trembled and broke into tears and decided to let his secret out. To start with, he first asked his brothers if they remembered what they had done with Yūsuf and his brother at a time when they were ignorant, unable to distinguish between good and bad, and quite neglectful of acting with foresight.

When his brothers heard his question, they were dumbfounded. What has the 'Azīz of Miṣr got to do with the story of Yūsuf? Then, they recollected the dream seen by young Yūsuf the interpretation of which was that he would achieve some high rank and they would have to bow down before him. Could it be that this 'Azīz of Miṣr is none else but Yūsuf himself? Then, as they exerted and deliberated a little more, they recognized him by some signs. Still, to confirm it further, they asked him: ءَ اِنَّكَ لَاَنْتَ يُوْسُفُ (Are you really the Yūsuf?). Then, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: 'Yes, I am Yūsuf and this is my brother, Benyamin.' He supplemented his statement by adding the name of his brother so that they become certain about him. In addition to that, he also wanted them to become sure right then about the total success of their mission, that is, the two they had started to search for were there before them, both at the same time and place. Then, he said: قَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا ط اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّتَّقِ وَ يَصْبِرْ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُضِيْعُ اَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ, that is, 'Allah has been very kind to us [that he first gave both of us two qualities, those of patience (*Ṣabr*) and the fear of Allah

(*Taqwā*), qualities which are a key to success and a security shield against every hardship. Then He changed hardship into comfort, separation into union, and our paucity of wealth and recognition into its total abundance. 'Surely, whoever fears Allah [and abstains from sins] and observes patience [while in distress], then Allah does not waste the reward of the good- doers [like these].'

Now the brothers of Yūsuf had no choice left with them but to confess the wrongs they had done and admit the grace and excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. So, in one voice, they all said: تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ اٰثَرَكَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا وَاِنْ كُنَّا لَخٰطِئِيْنَ : 'By God, Allah has given to you preference over us [which you deserved], and we were surely in error [in whatever we did - and so, forgive us in the name of Allah].' To this in reply, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said what a prophet of his stature would say: لَاتَثْرِيْبَ عَلَيْكُمُ (No reproach upon you), that is, 'not to say much about taking a revenge of your injustices against me, on this day, I would not even blame you for it.' This much was the good news of forgiveness from his side which he let them hear. Then, he prayed for them before Allah Taʿālā: يَغْفِرُاللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ۫ وَهُوَاَرْحَمُ الرّٰحِمِيْنَ (May Allah forgive you, and He is the most merciful of all the merciful).

After that, he said: اِذْهَبُوْا بِقَمِيْصِيْ هٰذَا فَاَلْقُوْهُ عَلٰى وَجْهِ اَبِيْ يَاْتِ بَصِيْرًا وَاْتُوْنِيْ بِاَهْلِكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ : 'Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man [which will enable him to come here]. And bring to me all your family [so that all of us can get together, be happy, enjoy the blessings given by Allah and be grateful to Him].'

Points of Guidance

We come to know of many injunctions, rulings, as well as guidelines, which are good to have in life:

1. First of all, the use of the expression: تَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا ('*taṣaddaq 'alainā*': be charitable to us) in verse 88 raises a question as to how would Ṣadaqah and Khairāt (charity) become Ḥalāl (lawful) for the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who are the progeny of prophets? Secondly, even if Ṣadaqah could be taken as Ḥalāl, how would the act of asking for it become Ḥalāl? Even if the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were no prophets, he himself certainly was. Why did he not warn them against this error?

A clear enough answer to this is that the word Ṣadaqah used here does not mean the real Ṣadaqah. In fact, the request for a concession in

the transaction has been given the name of Ṣadaqah and Khairāt - because, they had just never asked for a free supply of grains. Instead, they had offered 'a capital of very little worth.' And the essence of their request was that this 'capital of very little worth' be accepted in the spirit of remission given in such hard circumstances. Moreover, it is also possible that the unlawfulness of Ṣadaqah and Khairāt (charity) for the progeny of prophets may be exclusive to the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ - as held by Mujāhid from among Tafsīr authorities. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

2. The last sentence of verse 88: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَجْزِى الْمُتَصَدِّقِيْنَ (Surely, Allah rewards the charitable) tells us that Allah Ta'ālā gives good return to those who spend in Ṣadaqah and Khairāt (charity). But, there are details to it, that is, there is a general return for Ṣadaqah and Khairāt which is received by everyone, believer or disbeliever, right here in the present world. That return comes in the form of the removal of disasters and hardships. Then, there is the return which is particularly attached to the 'Ākhirah (Hereafter), that is, the Jannah (Paradise). That is for the believers only. Since the addressee here is the 'Azīz of Miṣr - and the brothers of Yūsuf did not know at that time whether or not he was a believer - therefore, they opted for a sentence which was general, and which included the return of the present world, as well as that of the Hereafter. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Besides, this being an address to the 'Azīz of Miṣr, the occasion obviously demanded that the address in this sentence should have been direct, as: 'Allah will give you the best of return.' But, as his being a believer was not known, therefore, the form of address used was general, and any special return for him was not mentioned. (Qurṭubī)

3. The sentence: قَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا (Allah has been very kind to us) in verse 90 proves that, should one be in some distress or hardship, then, Allah Ta'ālā delivers one from these and showers him or her with his blessings, now, after that, such a person should not talk about his past hardships anymore. Instead, one should remember nothing but this blessing and favour of Allah Ta'ālā which one now has. After having been delivered from distress, and after having been blessed by Divine rewards, to continue crying over past hardships is ingratitude. Such an ungrateful person has been called: كَنُوْد (*kanūd*) in the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهٖ لَكَنُوْدٌ (Truly, man is to his Lord, ungrateful - 100:6). The word, *kanūd*, refers to a person who does not remember favours received, but does remember hardships faced.

Therefore, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام made no mention at this time of the hardships he had to undergo for a long time due to the actions of his brothers. Instead of that, he mentioned the blessings of Allah only.

4. The last sentence: اِنَّهٗ مَنْ يَّتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ (Surely, whoever fears Allah and observes patience, then Allah does not waste the reward of the good-doers) in verse 90 tells us that Taqwā, that is, abstention from sins, and Ṣabr, that is, patience and fortitude, are two qualities which deliver one from every disaster and distress. The Holy Qur'ān has said at several places that a person's prosperity and success depend on these two qualities, for example: وَاِنْ تَصْبِرُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا لَايَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا , that is, 'if you keep patience and fear Allah, their cunning shall not harm you at all - 3:120.'

A surface view of the verse here may suggest that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is claiming to be God-fearing and patient in the sense that it was because of his Taqwā and Ṣabr that he was blessed with deliverance from difficulties and rewarded with high ranks. But, no one can claim Taqwā for himself. It is prohibited by definite statements in the Holy Qur'ān, for example: فَلَا تُزَكُّوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقٰى (Therefore do not claim purity for yourself: He knows best who it is that guards against evil - 53:32). But, in reality, there is no claim here. Instead, this is a confession of the blessings and favours of Allah Ta'ālā, for He first gave him the Taufīq of Ṣabr and Taqwā and then, through it, came all blessings from Him.

The declaration: لَاتَثْرِيْبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ (No reproach upon you today) in verse 92 has been made from the highest level of good morals whereby the oppressor was not only forgiven, but spared from reproach too.

Verses 93 - 100

اِذْهَبُوْا بِقَمِيْصِيْ هٰذَا فَاَلْقُوْهُ عَلٰى وَجْهِ اَبِيْ يَاْتِ بَصِيْرًا ۚ وَاْتُوْنِيْ
بِاَهْلِكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿۹۳﴾ وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيْرُ قَالَ اَبُوْهُمْ اِنِّيْ لَاَجِدُ رِيْحَ
يُوْسُفَ لَوْلَآ اَنْ تُفَنِّدُوْنِ ﴿۹۴﴾ قَالُوْا تَاللّٰهِ اِنَّكَ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلِكَ الْقَدِيْمِ
﴿۹۵﴾ فَلَمَّآ اَنْ جَآءَ الْبَشِيْرُ اَلْقٰهُ عَلٰى وَجْهِهٖ فَارْتَدَّ بَصِيْرًا ۚ قَالَ اَلَمْ
اَقُلْ لَّكُمْ ۚ اِنِّيْٓ اَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَالَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۹۶﴾ قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْلَنَا

ذُنُوبَنَآ إِنَّا كُنَّا خٰطِئِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾ قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّيٓ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ
الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٩٨﴾ فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَىٰ يُوسُفَ ءَاوَىٰٓ إِلَيْهِ أَبَوَيْهِ وَقَالَ
ادْخُلُوا مِصْرَ إِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ءَامِنِينَ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ
وَخَرُّوا لَهُۥ سُجَّدًا ۚ وَقَالَ يٰٓأَبَتِ هٰذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُءْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۡ قَدْ
جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا ۖ وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِيٓ إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَآءَ
بِكُمْ مِّنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ أَنْ نَّزَغَ الشَّيْطٰنُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِيٓ ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي
لَطِيفٌ لِّمَا يَشَآءُ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man. And bring to me all your family." [93]

And when the caravan set out, their father said, "I sense the scent of Yūsuf if you do not take me to be senile." [94]

They said, "By God, you are still in your old fallacy!" [95] **So, when came the man with good news, he put it (the shirt) on his face, and he turned into a sighted man. He (Ya'qūb) said, "Did I not tell you that I know from Allah what you do not know?"** [96]

They said, 'Our father, pray to Allah to forgive us our sins. Surely, we have been wrong." [97]

He said, "I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you. Surely, He is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful." [98]

Later, when they came to Yūsuf, he placed his parents near himself and said, "Enter Egypt, God willing, in peace." [99]

And he raised his parents up on the throne, and they all fell before him in prostration. And he said, "My father, here is the fulfillment of my early dream. My Lord has made it come true. He favoured me when he released me from the prison and brought you from the countryside after Satan had caused a rift between me and my brothers. Surely, my Lord does what He wills, in a subtle way. Surely, He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise." [100]

Commentary

The previous verses about the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام have told us about the time when, by the will of Allah, it was appropriate for him to disclose his secret to his brothers. This he did. His brothers sought his forgiveness. He, not only that he forgave them, did not even choose to admonish them for what they had done to him in the past. In fact, he prayed to Allah Ta'ālā for them. Meeting his father was now his next concern. Given the conditions, he found it better that his father comes to him with the family. But, having come to know that his father had lost his eyesight as a result of his separation from him, that became his first concern. So, he said to his brothers: اِذْهَبُوْا بِقَمِيْصِىْ هٰذَا فَاَلْقُوْهُ عَلٰى وَجْهِ اَبِىْ يَاْتِ بَصِيْرًا (Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man - 93). It is obvious that putting someone's shirt on the face of a person cannot become the physical cause of an eyesight to return. In fact, this was a miracle of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام for he, by the will of Allah, knew that once his shirt was put over the face of his father, Allah Ta'ālā will give him his eyesight back.

Tafsīr authorities, Ḍaḥḥāk and Mujāhid have said that this was the inherent quality of that shirt because it was not like ordinary clothes. Instead, it was brought from Paradise for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام at the time when he was thrown into the fire naked by Nimrūd. Then, this apparel of Paradise remained preserved with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. After his death, it passed on to Sayyidnā Isḥaq عليه السلام. After his death, it came to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. In view of its status as a sacred legacy, he put it inside a tube, sealed it and made Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام wear it round his neck as a Ta'wīdh (spiritual charm) so that he remains safe against the evil eye. When the brothers of Yūsuf removed the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to deceive their father and he was thrown into the well without it, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn came, and opening the tube hanging round his neck, took this shirt out from it, and made Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام wear it. Since that time, it remained preserved with him. When needed again, it was Jibra'īl al-Amīn again who advised Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that this shirt was an apparel of Paradise. It had a unique property. If put over the face of a blind person, he becomes sighted. He asked him to send it to his father and he would become a sighted man.

The view of Ḥaḍrat Mujaddid Alf Thānī رحمه الله تعالى is that the beauty,

rather the very existence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, was itself a thing of the Paradise. Therefore, every shirt that touched his body could have this property. (Maẓharī)

Said in the last sentence of verse 93 was: وَأْتُونِي بِأَهْلِكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ that is, 'all of you, my brothers, bring your entire family to me.' Though, the real purpose was to have his respected father come to him but, here he did not specifically mention his father, instead, talked about bringing the family - perhaps, because he considered that asking his father to be brought to him was contrary to etiquette. However, he was already certain that the sight of his father would return and there would remain no reason which could stop him from coming to him, rather, he would himself want to honour him with his visit. According to a narration reported by Al-Qurṭubī, Yahūdā (Judah) from among the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ offered to carry this shirt personally - because, it was he who had carried young Yūsuf's shirt smeared with fake blood and which brought many shocks for his father, and now, it should be him again who should carry the shirt in his own hands, so that amends could be made for past injustices.

Verse 94 opens with the words: وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ 'And when the caravan set out' (and had reached barely outside the limits of the city), then, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ said (to those around him): 'I sense the scent of Yūsuf if you do not take me to be senile.' According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ there was a travel distance of eight days from the city of Egypt to Can'aan, and according to Sayyidnā Ḥasan ؓ the distance was eighty *farsakh,* that is, nearly two hundred and fifty miles. Unique is the power of Allah Ta'ālā who, from such a distance, carried all the way to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ, the scent of his son Yūsuf through the shirt of his son Yūsuf. And some thing of wonder it certainly is that this scent, when Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was sitting confined into a well of his own homeland, caused no reaction into the smell buds of his father! Right from here, we learn that no miracle is in the control of a prophet. In fact, a miracle is not even the personal act and action of the prophet. This is directly the act of Allah. When Allah Ta'ālā wills, He makes a miracle manifest itself. And when the Divine will is not there, the nearest of the near recedes into the farthest.

In verse 95, it was said: قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي ضَلَالِكَ الْقَدِيمِ (They said, 'By God, you are still in your old fallacy!'). It means that those around Sayyidnā

Ya'qūb عليه السلام commented on what he had said by wondering that he still seemed to be engrossed into his old fallacy, that is: 'Yūsuf is alive and we shall meet again.'

Said in verse 96 is: فَلَمَّآ اَنْ جَآءَ الْبَشِيْرُ that is, 'when this man with the good news reached Can'aan' and put the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام over the face of his father, his eyesight returned and he became a sighted man. The man who came with the good news was Yahūda, the same brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who had brought his shirt from Egypt.

The last sentence of the verse is: قَالَ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ لَّكُمْ اِنِّیْٓ اَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَالَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ (He [Ya'qūb] said, 'Did I not tell you that I know from Allah what you do not know?' - 96) - that Yūsuf is alive and we shall meet again.

Now, when the truth of the matter became clear, the brothers of Yūsuf asked for the forgiveness of their father in a spiritually endearing style by saying: قَالُوْا يٰٓاَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْلَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا خٰطِئِيْنَ : 'Our father, pray to Allah to forgive us our sins. Surely, we have been wrong - 97.' Thus, it is obvious that a person who prays to Allah Ta'ālā for the forgiveness of their sins would do that himself too.

The reply given by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was: قَالَ سَوْفَ اَسْتَغْفِرُلَكُمْ رَبِّیْ (I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you ... - 98).

Here, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has, instead of praying for them instantly, made a promise that he would pray for them soon. Commentators have generally given a reason for this. According to them, his purpose was to pray for them particularly, in peace and with concentration, towards the later part of the night - because the prayer made at that hour is answered specially. This is as it appears in a Ḥadīth in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim that, in the last third part of every night, Allah Ta'ālā descends in all His Glory close to the firmament near the Earth, and proclaims: Is there someone who would pray to Me, and I would answer? Is there someone who would seek forgiveness from Me, and I would forgive ?

About what has been said in the next verse: فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ (Later, when they came to Yūsuf ... - 99), it appears in some narrations that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had sent with his brothers this time a large supply of clothes and other articles of need all loaded on some two hundred camels, so

that the whole family could make good preparations in anticipation of their visit to Egypt. Thus, all set for the trip, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام and his entire family set out for Egypt, their number, according to one narration, was seventy two and, according to the other, it was comprised of ninety three men and women.

On the other side, when came the time for their arrival in Egypt, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and the people of Egypt came out of the city to receive them. With them came four thousand soldiers to present a guard of honour. When these guests reached Egypt and entered the home of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام he lodged his parents with him.

Here, the text refers to 'parents.' - though, the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had died during his childhood, but after her death, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had married Layya, the sister of his late wife. She was, in her capacity as the maternal aunt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, almost like his own mother, and also as the married wife of his father, was deserving of being called as nothing but his mother.*

At the end of verse 99, the statement: وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوا مِصْرَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِنِينَ (he said, 'Enter Egypt, God willing, in peace') means that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام asked all his family members to enter Egypt by the will of Allah and without any fear or restriction, the sense being that they were free from usual restrictions placed on travellers who enter another country.

Verse 100 opens with the words: وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ (And he raised his parents up on the throne), that is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had his parents sit with him on the royal throne.

After that it was said: وَخَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا (and they all fell before him in pros-

---

*. This interpretation is according to the *riwāyah* where it has been said that the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had died at the time of Benyāmin's birth. It is on this basis that the present text of the respected author, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, appears to be contradictory to the relevant text on page 38 of Volume V where the name of Sayyidnā Yūsuf's mother علیہا السلام has been given as Rāḥīl. But, in reality, there is no authentic *riwāyah* in this connection. Isrā'īlī *riwāyāt* do exist, but they too are contradictory. The author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has himself said that the Jewish chroniclers do not subscribe to the view that the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had died at the time of Benyāmin's birth. If this *riwāyah* is given credence, no doubt remains. Then, in this situation, by the words: ورفع ابويه (And he raised his parents up on the throne - 100), the reference would be to the real mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام . Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr have opted for this as the weightier view. So, commenting on this, Ibn Kathīr has said: قال ابن جرير ولم يقم دليل على موت امه (اى ام يوسف عليه السلام) وظاهر القران يدل على حياتها - **Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī.**

tration), that is, the parents, and all brothers did *sajdah* before Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has said that this prostration of gratitude was for Allah Ta'ālā, and not for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Others have said that a Sajdah or Sujūd (prostration) as part of 'Ibādah (worship) when done for anyone other than Allah has always been forbidden in the Sharī'ah of every prophet. But, the Sajdah of Ta'ẓīm (veneration) was permissible in the religious codes of past prophets - which has been prohibited in the Sharī'ah of Islām on the basis that it is a source of Shirk. This is confirmed by Ḥadīth reports from Al-Bukhārī and Muslim that Sajdah (prostration) for anyone other than Allah is not Ḥalāl.

And when both his father and mother, and eleven of his brothers, prostrated before him simultaneously, he remembered the dream he had seen in his childhood, and he said: وَقَالَ يٰٓأَبَتِ هٰذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُءْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا : 'My father, here is the fulfillment of my early dream,' that 'the sun and the moon and eleven stars are prostrating to me,' and I am grateful that 'my Lord has made it come true.'

Rules and Points of Guidance

1. When his sons requested Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام to pray to Allah for their forgiveness, he said, 'I shall (soon) pray to my Lord to forgive you.' He did not make that *du'ā'* instantly. He delayed it.

One of the reasons given by commentators for this delay is that he first wanted to check with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام whether or not he has forgiven them - because, unless the victim of injustice forgives, there is no forgiveness from Allah either. So, this being the state of affairs, the making of a prayer for forgiveness was not appropriate.

Pointed to here is a matter of sound principle - that no violation of the rights of the servants of Allah (*Ḥuqūq al-'Ibād*) gets to be forgiven unless the holder of the right receives his right back, or forgives it - only verbal repentance for it is not enough.

2. According to a narration of Sufyān al-Thawrī رحمه الله تعالى, when Yahūdā brought in the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and put it over the face of his father, he asked: How is Yūsuf? Yahūdā told him that he was the king of Egypt. Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said: I am not asking if he is a

prince or a pauper. I am asking how is he in his faith and deed. Then he told him about the qualities of his character and how God-fearing and chaste in conduct he was. This is how the noble prophets love and relate to their children. They are more concerned about the state of their spiritual life than they are with the state of their physical comfort. This is the model every Muslim should follow.

3. According to Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan رحمه الله تعالى, when the carrier of the good news arrived with the shirt of his separated son, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام wished to give him something in reward. But, life was hard, therefore, he apologized that there was no bread baked in the house for seven days and he could not give a material reward. However, he prayed that Allah Ta'ālā makes the agony of death easy on him. Al-Qurṭubī has said that this prayer was the best reward for him.

4. This event also tells us that the giving of a reward to someone who brings a good news is a practice of the blessed prophets. An event relating to Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه from among the noble Ṣaḥābah is well known. He had not participated in the battle of Tabūk for which he was reproached and punished - though his repentance was later accepted. When the man with the good news of this acceptance came to him, he gave the dress he was wearing to him.

In addition to that, it also proves that inviting friends over meals on occasions of happiness is Sunnah. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه when he completed his reading of Sūrah al-Baqarah, shared his happiness with others by inviting them to eat with him for which he slaughtered a camel.

5. The sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, once the truth had come out in the open, asked for the forgiveness of their father and brother. This tells us that a person who has caused pain to someone, by word or action, or remains responsible for returning any right owed to him, then, it is obligatory on that person that he must pay back that right immediately, or have it forgiven by him.

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه there is a report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A person who has someone's financial right due against him, or may have caused pain to him, by word or action, then, he must pay it back today, or get it off

his shoulders by seeking forgiveness - before comes the day of Qiyāmah where no one would have any property or wealth from which rights could be paid back. Therefore, his good deeds will be given to the victim of injustice and he will be left empty-handed. And if, he has no good deeds in his account, the sins of the other person will be put on his shoulders. May Allah protect us all from this.

Patience and Gratitude : The Dignified Station of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام

To pick up the thread of the story, we see that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام starts telling his parents things which happened to him. This is a point where it would be useful to stop for a while and think. Had someone in our day been subjected to go through all those hardships which were faced by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and had he been enabled to meet his parents after such a long trial of separation and disappointment, just imagine where would he begin his tale of woes, how would he cry and make others do the same, and how many days and nights would he spend in recounting the hardships faced by him? But, the two parties, the teller and the listener, are both no less than two messengers and prophets of Allah. Worth observing is their conduct in this matter. Here is the very dear separated son of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, when he meets his father after having gone through the long period of so many hardships, see what he says:

وَقَدْ اَحْسَنَ بِیْٓ اِذْ اَخْرَجَنِیْ مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَآءَ بِكُمْ مِّنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَنْ نَّزَغَ الشَّیْطٰنُ
بَیْنِیْ وَبَیْنَ اِخْوَتِیْ

> He favoured me when He released me from the prison and brought you from the countryside after the Satan had caused a rift between me and my brothers - 100.

The hardships faced by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام can be divided over three stages respectively: (1) The injustices of his brothers; (2) the separation from his parents; (3) the pain of the prison. What this great prophet of Allah has done is that, in his statement, he has changed the order of events as they had happened. He started from the prison. Then, he said nothing about how he had entered the prison and how he had suffered there. Rather, talked about how he was released from the prison and mentioned that too with words of gratitude for Allah Ta'ālā. As a corollary of his release from the prison and his gratitude to Allah for it, he

also told them that he has been in the prison for a certain time.

Worth noticing here is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has mentioned his release from the prison. But, he has not said anything about the prison of the well in which his brothers had thrown him. He did not mention it even functionally, as in 'He released me from the prison - 100.' The reason is that he had already forgiven the mistake made by his brothers, and had said: لَا تَثْرِيْبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ (No reproach upon you today - 92). Therefore, he did not consider it proper to mention the incident of the well in any form whatsoever, so that his brothers may not be put to shame. (Qurṭubī)

After that, he was supposed to dwell on the long and trying separation from his parents, and talk about how they had affected him. But, he set all these things aside. He took up the last part of it and mentioned his meeting with the parents and said so by thanking Allah for it: 'and brought you from the countryside (*al-badw*)' to this city of Egypt. There is a hint here to the blessing of Allah that He brought Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام from his home in the countryside, where conveniences of living are scarce, to a city with royal honours.

The first stage of the trials of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has not been mentioned yet. This concerns the injustices inflicted by his brothers on him. It is interesting that he sweeps the whole thing away as a handiwork of Satan and makes things come easy even by suggesting that his brothers were not of the kind who would do something like that. It was Satan who deceived them and caused this rift between them.

This is the elegance of prophets. Not only that they would be patient against pain and hardship, but that they would invariably find the occasion to be grateful to Allah under all conditions. Therefore, with prophets, there is no state of being in which they are not grateful to Allah Ta'ālā. This is contrary to what ordinary human beings would do. In their state of being, they would have thousands of blessings of Allah Ta'ālā being showered over them, yet they would not talk about them to anyone. And when they have some hardship overtake them at some time, they would go about crying over it all their lives. The Qur'ān has complained about this human mind-set when it says: إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُوْدٌ (that is, human beings are, to their Rabb, very ungrateful -100:6).

After having reduced the tale of his trials in three words, Sayyidnā

Yūsuf ﷺ said: إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِّمَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ (Surely, my Lord does what He wills, in a subtle way. Surely, He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise - 12:100).

Verse 101

رَبِّ قَدْ اٰتَيْتَنِيْ مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِيْ مِنْ تَاْوِيْلِ الْاَحَادِيْثِ ۚ فَاطِرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۣ اَنْتَ وَلِيّٖ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْاٰخِرَةِ ۚ تَوَفَّنِيْ مُسْلِمًا وَّاَلْحِقْنِيْ بِالصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿۱۰۱﴾

My Lord, You have given me some power to rule and a knowledge of interpreting events. O the Creator of the heavens and the Earth, You are my guardian in this world and the Hereafter. Make me die a Muslim and make me join the righteous." [101]

Commentary

The address of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ in the previous verses was to his respected father. Now, after having achieved an important objective by meeting his parents and brothers, he was at peace to devote himself directly to praising Allah Ta'ālā and to supplicating before Him. What he said appears immediately above. The '*ṣāliḥīn*' or 'the righteous' or morally the most perfect servants of Allah can be the prophets themselves for they are Divinely protected (*ma'ṣūm*) against all sins. (Maẓharī)

Worth noticing in this *du'ā'* is the prayer for a good end to life. It presents before us a profile of the typical servants of Allah who have the honour of being accepted in the sight of their Creator. Their attitude is that they may be enjoying the highest possible ranks in this world and in the Hereafter, and they may have all sorts of power and office beneath their feet, yet, they would never wax proud over these. In fact, they keep fearing lest such things around them may be taken away or cut down. So, they keep praying that the physical and spiritual blessings given to them by Allah Ta'ālā continue to be with them, even keep increasing, right through the hour of death.

At this stage, the unusual story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, and the subsequent chain of instructions and lessons, as mentioned in the Qur'ān,

has reached its completion. What happened after that has not been reported in the Holy Qur'ān, or in any Marfū' Ḥadīth (with its chain of reporting authorities ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself). Most commentators have reported that with reference to historical or Isra'īlī narrations.

Based on a narration by Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan رحمه الله تعالى, it has been reported in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was seven years old when his brothers had thrown him into a well. Then, he remained separated from his father for eighty years, remained alive for twenty three years after having met his parents, and died at the age of one hundred and twenty years.

As in the narrations of the People of the Book, reports Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, the period of separation between Sayyidnā Ya'qūb and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليهما السلام was forty years. Then, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, after his arrival in Egypt, lived in the company of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام for seventeen years. After that, he died.

As in the annals of historians, reports the author of Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام died after having lived for twenty four years in Egypt. Before his death, he ordered Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that his body should be sent to his home country and that he be buried by the side of his father, Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام.

Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رضي الله عنه has said that the body of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was placed in a coffin made of wood from saul tree and taken to Baytul-Maqdis. For this reason, it became common custom among Jews that they would take their dead from far away places to Baytul-Maqdis for a burial there. The age of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was one hundred and forty seven years when he died.

When Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام entered Egypt with his family, says Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه, they were a total of ninety three men and women - and when this progeny of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, that is, the Banī Isrā'īl, left Egypt with Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, their number was six hundred and seventy thousand.[1] (Qurṭubī & Ibn Kathīr)

1. As pointed out earlier, this is based on Israelite narrations. Ibn Khaldūn, the well-known Muslim historian, has criticized this narration in his Muqaddimah and has urged that the number of Banī Isrā'īl was not that big - (Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī)

It has been mentioned earlier that, after the death of the former 'Azīz of Miṣr, the king of Egypt had arranged the marriage of Zulaikhā with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

It appears in the Torah and in the historical accounts of the People of the Book that they had two sons, Ifrā'īm and Manshā, and a girl, Raḥma bint Yūsuf. Raḥma was married to Sayyidnā Ayyub عليه السلام. Of the progeny of Ifrā'īm, there was Yusha' ibn Nūn عليه السلام who was a companion of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام (Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام died at the age of one hundred and twenty years and he was buried by the bank of the river Nile.

Based on a narration by Sayyidnā 'Urwah ibn Zubayr رحمه الله تعالى, Ibn Isḥāq has reported: When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was commanded to leave Egypt with the Banī Isrā'īl, it was revealed to him that he should not leave the body of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in Egypt and he was ordered to take it with him to Syria and bury him close to his ancestors. In obedience to this order, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام made investigations and succeeded in locating his burial place. He found his body in a marble coffin which he took with him to Can'aan in Palestine. There he buried him beside Sayyidnā Isḥāq and Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. (Maẓharī)

After Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the Amalkites took over Egypt as the new Pharaohs. As for the Banī Isrā'īl, they lived under them but kept adhering to the Faith of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. However, they were taken as foreigners and subjected to all sorts of painful discriminations. Finally, Allah Ta'ālā delivered them from this punishment through Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

Rules and Points of Guidance

1. From the previous verses (99-100), we learn that paying due respect to parents is obligatory (*wājib*) - as it stands proved from what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did.

2. We also learn from here that a prostration of reverence was permissible in the religious code of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which is why his parents and brothers prostrated to him. But, in the Sharī'ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, this Sajdah or Sujūd has been declared as a particular mark of 'Ibādah (worship) and it cannot be done before anyone other than Al-

lah. If done, it is Ḥarām. The Holy Qur'ān has said: لاَ تَسْجُدُوْا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلاَ لِلْقَمَرِ (prostrate not to the Sun and the Moon ... - 41:37). And in Ḥadīth, it is said that Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ﷺ, when he went to Syria, saw local Christians prostrating to their parents. After his return from there, he started making a prostration before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He asked him not to do that. He said: If I were to take prostration before anyone as permissible, I would have told a wife to prostrate before her husband. Similarly, when Sayyidnā Salmān al-Farisī ﷺ wished to prostrate to him, he said:

لاَ تَسْجُدْ لِىْ يَا سَلْمَانُ وَاسْجُدْ لِلْحَيِّ الَّذِىْ لاَ يَمُوْتُ

Do not prostrate to me, O Salmān, instead, prostrate to the Ever-Living who would never die. (Ibn Kathīr)

This tells us that a prostration done as a token of respect for the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not permissible. With that being the truth, how can it become permissible if done before a saint, or an elder or *pīr*?

3. From: هٰذَا تَأْوِيْلُ رُءْيَاىَ مِنْ قَبْلُ (here is the fulfillment of my early dream - 100), we learn that the fulfillment of the interpretation of a dream could sometimes take a long time to materialize - as it was in the present case when it manifested itself after forty, or eighty, years. (Ibn Jarīr & Ibn Kathīr)

4. The words: قَدْ اَحْسَنَ بِىْ (He favoured me - 100) said by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ prove that if a person after having been suffering from a disease or disaster, finds him or her delivered from it, then, following the traditional way of prophets, he or she must show gratitude to Allah for this deliverance, and forget about any remembrance of that disease or disaster.

5. From the statement: اِنَّ رَبِّىْ لَطِيْفٌ لِّمَا يَشَآءُ (Surely, my Lord does what He wills, in a subtle way - 100), we learn that, when Allah Ta'ālā intends to do something, He has His subtle ways of arranging things and causes secretly in a manner that no one can get the slightest inkling about it.

6. The words of prayer: تَوَفَّنِىْ مُسْلِمًا (Make me die a Muslim - 101) refer to the prayer of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ in which he has wished to die while adhering to his Belief and Faith ('Īmān and Islām). This tells us that to make a *du'ā'* for death under particular conditions is not prohibited. And

as for the prohibition of wishing for death in sound and authentic Aḥādīth, the purpose there is to tell people that it is not correct to go about asking for death just because of depression from worldly hardships or simple lack of patience. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: Let no one ask for death because of some hardship. If one has to say something like that, let him say: 'Yā Allāh, keep me alive as long as life is better for me, and give me death when death is better for me.'

Verses 102 - 109

ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ اِلَيْكَ ۚ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ اِذْ اَجْمَعُوْٓا
اَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُوْنَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَمَآ اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
﴿١٠٣﴾ وَمَا تَسْئَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ اَجْرٍ ؕ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٤﴾
وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ يَمُرُّوْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا
مُعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ اَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللّٰهِ اِلَّا وَهُمْ مُّشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾
اَفَاَمِنُوْٓا اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمْ غَاشِيَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ اللّٰهِ اَوْتَاْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً وَّهُمْ
لَايَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ قُلْ هٰذِهٖ سَبِيْلِىْٓ اَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۟ عَلٰى بَصِيْرَةٍ اَنَا
وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِىْ ؕ وَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا
مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِىْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى ؕ اَفَلَمْ يَسِيْرُوْا فِى
الْاَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوْا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ وَلَدَارُ الْاٰخِرَةِ
خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا ؕ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you. And you were not there before them when they determined their object and they were planning devices. [102]

And most of the people are not going to believe, even though you long for it. [103] **And you do not ask of them a reward for it. It is nothing but a lesson for all the (people of the) worlds.** [104]

How many a sign there is in the heavens and the Earth

which they pass by and they are heedless to it. [105] **And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating partners with Him.** [106]

Do they feel secure from that there comes to them Allah's enveloping punishment or that there comes to them the Hour suddenly while they are not conscious of it? [107]

Say, "This is my way. I call (people) to Allah with full cognition - myself and my followers. And pure is Allah. And I am not among the Mushriks*." [108]

And We did not send before you (messengers) other than men from the people of the towns whom We inspired with revelation. Have they not travelled in the land where they would have seen how was the fate of those before them? And surely the abode of the Hereafter is much better for those who fear Allah. Would you, then, still not understand? [109]

Commentary

After a full description of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ, first to come in the verses cited above is an address to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ اِلَيْكَ (That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you), and that 'you were not there with the brothers of Yūsuf when they had decided to throw Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ into the well and were making plans for it.'

The purpose of choosing to say this is that the very act of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in describing this story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ correctly and in full details is a clear proof of his being a prophet and recepient of revelation. The reason is that this story dates back to thousands of years before his time. Neither was he present there on the scene to have described it as an eye witness, nor was he ever taught by anyone to have consulted books of history, or heard it from a teacher and described it. Therefore, there is no way he could have known it in the manner he did except that it be Divine revelation itself.

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has considered it sufficient to say that 'you were not there.' It has not deemed it necessary to mention that this information did not come to him through another person or book because

*. Those who associate partners with Allah

the whole Arabia knew that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was an Ummiyy - that is, he did not learn to read and write from anyone. And also known to everyone was that he had lived his whole life in Makkah al-Mu'azzamah. He did make one of his trips to Syria with his uncle Abū Ṭālib, a trip in which he came back home while still enroute. The second trip he made was for business. He finished his work there and returned in a few days. In this trip too, there was no chance of his meeting some scholar or going to an educational institution. Therefore, at this place, it was not considered necessary to mention it. And at another occasion in the Holy Qur'an this too was further clarified by saying: مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَآ أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هٰذَا , that is, 'you did not know them (events) before this (the revelation of the Qur'ān), neither you nor your people -11:49"

Imām Al-Baghawī has said that the Jews and the Quraysh had joined hands to test the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. For this purpose, they had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ to tell them everything about Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام as it had happened to him, if he was true in his claim of prophethood. When he told them what he had learnt through Divine revelation, they still remained sticking to their disbelief and denial. This shocked the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thereupon, said in the next verse was: 'And most of the people are not going to believe' - even though, the proofs of his being a prophet were clear, and even if he himself longed for it, or tried his best. The sense of the statement is: 'Your duty is to spread the call and seek the betterment of people. That you succeed in it is not in your control nor is this your responsibility nor should you grieve over it.'

After that it was said: وَمَا تَسْئَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِينَ , that is, 'your mission is to tell them the truth and call them to the straight path. For this you do not ask them to give you something in return - which could have caused them to find it difficult to listen to him or follow him. In fact, what you are telling them is for their own good. It is only an advice to heed to and a lesson to learn from. And it is for everyone. The text here also carries a hint to the effect: When the purpose behind your effort is no worldly gain, in fact it is nothing but the reward of the Hereafter and the betterment of your people, then, that purpose of yours already stands achieved. Why would you then grieve over it?

Then, in verse 105, the attitude of the disbelievers is portrayed by saying:

وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ يَمُرُّوْنَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُوْنَ

> How many a sign there is in the heavens and the Earth which they pass by and they are heedless to it.

The sense is that these people are not of the kind who would simply not listen to a well-wisher out of their obstinacy. They are worse. They would not even learn from the very open signs of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā visible to them all the time, yet keep passing by them without paying any attention and without wondering whose signs they were. These signs of Divine wisdom and power are widely spread out and many in number. Out of these are many signs which remind people of punishments which descended upon past peoples, and they themselves see their overturned habitations, but they would still refuse to learn their lesson.

This was a description of people who simply did not believe in the existence of Allah Ta'ālā, the great Creator, and in His wisdom and power. Mentioned next are those who do believe in Allah as the Creator, but also associate other things as partners in His Divinity. It was said:

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ اَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللّٰهِ اِلَّا وَهُمْ مُّشْرِكُوْنَ

> And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating partners with Him - 106.

It means that those of them who profess a belief in Allah would do so by lacing it with Shirk. They would suggest others as partners in the attributes of knowledge and power which are exclusive for Allah Ta'ālā - which is rank injustice, and ignorance.

Ibn Kathīr has said that included under the sense of this verse are Muslims who, despite having *'Īmān*, are involved with different kinds of *Shirk*. According to the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: The most dangerous of things I apprehend for you is the small Shirk. When the Ṣaḥābah asked as to what could that be, he said: Hypocricy is the small Shirk. Similarly, swearing by someone or something other than Allah has been called Shirk in another Ḥadīth. (Ibn Kathīr from Tirmidhi) Vows and offerings (Mannat and Niyāz) in the name of anyone

other than Allah is also included under it, on which there is a consensus of Muslim jurists.

After that, in verse 107, questioned and deplored is their heedlessness and ignorance as to how could these people, despite their denial and rebellion, become so carefree of the possibility that there may come on them some punishment from Allah which overtakes them from all sides, or that the fateful Hour of the Day of Doom itself descends upon them all of a sudden while they are not ready for it?

In verse 108, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to state his position before these people:

قُلْ هٰذِهٖ سَبِيْلِيْٓ اَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۣ عَلٰي بَصِيْرَةٍ اَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِيْ ۭ وَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ۔

"Say, (you believe it or not) 'This is my way. I call (people) to Allah with full cognition - myself and my followers. And pure is Allah. And I am not among the associators - 108."

It means that the *da'wah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not based on some summary view of things, instead, it is the outcome of insight, reason and wisdom. In this act of 'full cognition,' the Holy Prophet ﷺ has included his followers as well. According to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ it refers to the noble Ṣaḥābah, may Allah be pleased with them all. They are the soldiers of *Allah subḥānahū wa Ta'ālā.* Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ said: The Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are the best people of this whole Ummah. Their hearts are pure and their knowledge is deep. They are far removed from formality. Allah Ta'ālā has chosen them to accompany and serve their Rasūl. You should learn their morals, habits and ways because they are the ones who are on the straight path.

It is also possible to take the expression: مَنِ اتَّبَعَنِيْ (and my followers) in the general sense whereby it would mean every person who is doing the duty of conveying the *da'wah* of the Rasūl of Allah to his Ummah right through the last day of the Qiyāmah. According to Kalbi and Ibn Zayd, this verse also makes it necessary for one who claims to follow the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he should spread his *da'wah* among people and make the teaching of the Qur'ān available to all. (Maẓharī)

The last sentence of verse 108 is: سُبۡحٰنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَآ اَنَا مِنَ الۡمُشۡرِكِيۡنَ (And pure is Allah [that is, free from *Shirk*]. And I am not among the Mushriks [that is, not of those who practice *Shirk*]). Since, a little earlier, mention was made that there are people who, when they profess belief in Allah, would mix it up with Shirk, whether open or padded or concealed. Therefore, he has declared that he has absolutely nothing to do with Shirk. The gist of what has been said here is: My *da'wah* does not aim at inviting people to become my servants. In fact, I myself am, also a servant of Allah - and it is this kind of servitude, servitude to none but Him, that I invite people to. However, since I am the *dā'ī* (the original maker of this call), it is obligatory that faith be put in me.

To this, the disbelievers of Makkah used to object. They took the plea that a Rasūl or messenger of Allah should not be a human being. He should, rather, be an angel. A reply to this doubt has been given in the next verse where it was said: وَمَآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مِنۡ قَبۡلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوۡحِىۡۤ اِلَيۡهِمۡ مِّنۡ اَهۡلِ الۡقُرٰى : It means that their thinking that it is an angel who should be the messenger and prophet of Allah and that a human being cannot occupy this station is baseless and ineffectual. Quite contrary to this, the case is just the reverse - that is, for human beings, a prophet of Allah has always been a human being. Nevertheless, he is distinct from human beings in general in that the Waḥy and message of Allah Ta'ālā comes to him directly. It is never the outcome of an individual effort or act by anyone. It is always Allah Ta'ālā Himself who would choose from among his servants the one who, in His knowledge and judgement, is the fittest for this mission. And this selection is based on particular attributes of personal excellence which are not found among human beings at large.

Onwards from here, there is an admonition to those who contravene the instructions given by the maker of the call on behalf of Allah (*dā'ī*), and invite the wrath and punishment of Allah upon them. It was said:

اَفَلَمۡ يَسِيۡرُوۡا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ فَيَنۡظُرُوۡا كَيۡفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ ؕ وَلَدَارُ الۡاٰخِرَةِ خَيۡرٌ لِّلَّذِيۡنَ اتَّقَوۡا ؕ اَفَلَا تَعۡقِلُوۡنَ

Have they not travelled in the land where they would have seen how was the fate of those before them? And surely the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who fear Allah. Would you, then, still not understand? - 109

and continue to prefer the short-lived comfort of the present world over the everlasting and perfect blessings and comforts of the 'Ākhirah.

Rules and Guidance

The Difference between the News of the Unseen and the Knowledge of the Unseen

1. The statement: ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ اِلَيْكَ (That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you - 102) has appeared in the same words in verse 44 of Sūrah Āl-'Imrān in the context of the story of Sayyidah Maryam, that is: ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ اِلَيْكَ (That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you - 3:44). Then, with a slight change, the same statement appears in verse 49 of Sūrah Hūd where it is related to the story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام: تِلْكَ مِنْ اَنْۢبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهَآ اِلَيْكَ (These are reports from the unseen [events] which We reveal to you - 11:49).

From these verses we learn that Allah Ta'ālā communicates to his prophets many a news of the unseen through Waḥy (revelation). He has particularly blessed our Rasūl ﷺ, known as the Head of all the messengers, with a special portion of the news from the unseen, which is more than that which has been given to all past prophets. This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ has informed the Muslim Ummah of many events due to happen right through the day of Qiyāmah, either briefly, or in details. All Aḥādīth given in the Kitāb al-Fitan of Ḥadīth books are full of them.

Since common people take the Knowledge of the Unseen (*'Ilm al-Ghayb*) only in the sense that a person somehow gets to become aware of the news of the unseen, and this quality is found at its best in the Holy Prophet ﷺ, therefore, they think that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was *'Ālim al-Ghayb* (knower of the Unseen). But, the Holy Qur'ān has declared in very clear words that: لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ (No one in the heavens, or on the Earth, knows the unseen except Allah - 27:65) which proves that no one, other than Allah Ta'ālā, can be called the *'Ālim al-Ghayb* or the Knower of the Unseen. The *'Ilm* of *al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the unseen) is the unique attribute of Allah Ta'ālā. Taking an apostle, messenger, prophet or angel as a sharer in this attribute amounts to equating him with Allah, and is what the Christians do, who declare a Rasūl to be the son of God, and a partner in Godhead. The

verses of the Holy Qur'ān quoted here make the truth of the matter very clear. It stands settled that the *'Ilm* of *al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the unseen) is an exclusive attribute of Allah Ta'ālā and the only *'Ālim al-Ghayb* (the Knower of the Unseen) is *Allah jalla thanā'uh* Himself. However, there are many news of the unseen which Allah Ta'ālā does give to his messengers through the medium of Waḥy (revelation). This, in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān, is not known as the *'Ilm of al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the unseen). Since common people do not understand this fine difference, they tend to take the news of the unseen as the knowledge of the unseen. This is why when one adheres to the terminology of the Qur'ān and asserts that no one, other than Allah, can claim to know what is unseen, they would prefer to differ, rather than accept truth as it is.

Messengers are from Men

2. From the word: رِجَالاً (*rijālan* : men) in verse 109:

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اِلاَّ رِجَالاً نُّوحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى

> And We did not send before you [messengers] other than men from the people of the towns - 109,

we learn that messengers are always men. A woman cannot become a *nabiyy* (prophet) and *rasūl* (messenger).

Imām Ibn Kathīr has reported the consensus of 'Ulamā' that Allah Ta'ālā has not made any woman a *nabiyy* or *rasūl*. Some 'Ulamā' have identified some women as being a *nabīyy* or prophet, for example, Sayyidah Sārah, the wife of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Sayyidah Maryam, the mother of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. The reason is that there are particular words in the Holy Qur'ān about these three respected women which give the impression that angels talked to them as Divinely commanded, gave them good news, or they themselves came to know something through the medium of Divine revelation. But the majority of 'Ulamā, though they do accept that the words of such verses prove that these respected women had a high spiritual rank in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā, but, according to them, these words are not sufficient as proofs of their being prophets and messengers.

Messengers are from Towns

3. The expression: اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى (men from the people of the towns) appear-

ing in the verse quoted immediately above tells us that Allah Ta'ālā sends his messengers generally from among those who live in cities and towns. Messengers are not from among those who reside in the countryside and forest lands - because the dwellers of these habitations are generally rustic, hard and less perfect in comprehension and understanding. (Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī & others)

Verses 110 - 111

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا اسْتَيْـَٔسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِبُوْا جَآءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۙ
فَنُجِّىَ مَنْ نَّشَآءُ ؕ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَاْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۰﴾ لَقَدْ
كَانَ فِىْ قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّاُولِى الْاَلْبَابِ ؕ مَا كَانَ حَدِيْثًا يُّفْتَرٰى
وَلٰكِنْ تَصْدِيْقَ الَّذِىْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيْلَ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ وَّهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً
لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۱﴾ ع

(Punishment was often delayed) until when the messengers were in despair and thought that they were wrong in their estimation, Our help came to them, then saved were those whom We willed. And Our punishment is not averted from the guilty. [110]

Surely, in the narratives of these, there is a lesson for the people of understanding. It is not an invented story, rather, a confirmation of what has been before it, and an elaboration of everything, and guidance and mercy for a people who believe. [111]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was the sending of prophets who invited people to take the straight path, and also answered there were some doubts about them. Then, people were admonished that they do not take into consideration the sad end they would face as a result of their antagonism towards prophets of Allah. Only if they were to pay some attention and look around and read signs from ruined cities and the history of lost places they pass by, they would find out how harsh has been the sad end of those who had opposed the blessed prophets, and that too, right here in this world. The habitation of the people of

Sayyidnā Lūṭ ﷺ was overturned upside down. The people of 'Ād and Thamūd were destroyed through various punishments. And the punishment of the Hereafter, that is far more severe.

Then, towards the end, they were instructed that the pain and pleasure of the present life is, after all, very short-lived. One 's real concern should be about the life to come, the 'Ākhirah, the Hereafter, where one shall stay for ever, and where the pain, or pleasure, too shall be eternal. So, it was made clear that a good end of life in the 'Ākhirah depends on Taqwā, the fear of Allah and the abstention from sins, and which, in a nutshell, means that one should strictly adhere to all commandments of the Sharī'ah.

Since the purpose in the previous verses was to warn people of the time by telling them to take their lesson from what had happened to past prophets and their communities, therefore, in the next verse (110), one of their doubts was removed. The doubt they had was about the warnings of Divine punishment given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They were hearing about it from him for a long time, but they did not see any punishment coming upon them. This made them all the more daring. If there was some punishment to come, it would have come by now, they thought. Therefore, it was said that Allah Ta'ālā, in His mercy and wisdom, would often keep giving respite to erring and sinning people - and this respite, at times, could also become fairly long. That is why contumacious people become more daring and aggressive which causes a certain anxiety to prophets. So, it was said:

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا اسْتَيْـَٔسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوْٓا اَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِبُوْا جَآءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۙ فَنُجِّيَ مَنْ نَّشَآءُ ۭ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَاْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ

(Punishment was often delayed) until when the messengers were in despair and thought that they were wrong in their estimation, Our help came to them, then saved were those whom We willed. And Our punishment is not averted from the guilty - 110).

To explain it in detail, it can be said, that: 'The disbelieving and disobedient people of past communities were given long respites, until when, because of the punishment not coming upon them, the messengers were in despair over the possibility that the punishment of Allah will not come upon such people and truth will not manifest itself in the manner

and at the time they had hoped it to be, and thought that, while determining the time of the Divine promise, they were wrong in their estimation - that Allah Ta'ālā had not told them of a definite time, and the time was fixed by them as based on particular signs. It was in this state of despair that Our help came to them, that is, the punishment on disbelievers came as promised, then saved from the punishment were those 'whom We willed (that is, believers in prophets were saved and disbelievers were destroyed) because Our punishment is not averted from the guilty,' instead, it does come upon them, therefore, the disbelievers of Makkah should not be in any doubt about a delay in the punishment due. [Bayān al-Qur'ān: Gist of Tafsīr by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī]

The word: كُذِبُوا (*kudhibū* : were wrong) in verse 110 has been read as in the well-known reading (*Qirā'at*) of the Qur'ān - and the Tafsīr (exegesis or explanation) which we have chosen to follow is the one which is most sound and free from doubts. The essential sense of the word: كُذِبُوا (*kudhibū*) is to find one 's estimation or thinking as being wrong, which is a kind of Ijtihādī mistake (as based on personal opinion), and some such Ijtihādī mistake can issue forth from the blessed prophets. However, there is a difference between prophets عليهم السلام and other *mujtahids,* that is, when some Ijtihādī mistake issues forth from the prophets عليهم السلام, Allah Ta'ālā would not let them stay by that mistake, rather, He would make them become aware of it and enable them to see reality clearly. Other *mujtahids* do not occupy this station. The event of the Peace Pact of Ḥudaibiyah associated with the Holy Prophet ﷺ is sufficient as proof on this subject - because it has been stated in the Holy Qur'ān that this event is based on the dream which was seen by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He had seen that he was doing the Ṭawāf of the Baytullah with his Ṣaḥābah - and the dream of the blessed prophets is also an imperative form of revelation - therefore, the happening of this event became certain. But, in the dream itself, no particular time or duration was identified for it. The Holy Prophet ﷺ, according to his estimation, thought that it would happen the same year. So, he announced it before his Ṣaḥābah and taking a good number of them with him left for Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah for their 'Umra. But, the Quraysh confronted them enroute and they could not avail of their intended Ṭawāf and 'Umra. In fact, the full manifestation (of the dream) came to unfold itself two years later, in the Hijrah year 8, in the form of

the Conquest of Makkah. And from this event, it became apparent that the dream he had seen was true and certain. But, the time for it which, by signs or estimation, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had taken as the time, was not what it actually was - but that mistake was compensated right then.

Similarly, the expression: قَدْ كُذِبُوْا (*qad kudhibū* : were wrong) in the verse under reference also carries the same sense, that is, the punishment which was to come upon the disbelievers was delayed while the prophets had estimated a time for it in their minds. When this punishment did not come at that time, they thought that they had made a mistake in determining the time for it. This Tafsīr has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه. 'Allāma Al-Ṭībī has said that this report is Ṣaḥīḥ (sound) because it has been mentioned in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī. (Maẓharī)

In some readings (*Qirā'aat*) of the Qur'ān, this word has appeared with a doubled sound on the letter: ذال (*dhāl*), that is: قَدْ كُذِّبُوْا (*qad kudhdhibū*) as well. This word has been derived from the verbal noun: تکذیب (*takdhīb* : falsification). Given this reading, the sense would be: The prophets had determined an estimated time when the punishment would come, but when the punishment did not come at that time, they had apprehensions about their believers themselves, lest they should not falsifying them on the basis that their statement did not turn out to be true. These were the circumstances under which Allah Ta'ālā made His promise prove true, punishment fell on the deniers, believers were saved from it, and thus, overcome they did.

In the opening statement of the last verse of the Sūrah, it was said:

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِيْ قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

Surely, in the narratives of these, there is lesson for the people of understanding - 111.

This statement may be pointing to the stories of all prophets عليهم السلام in the Qur'ān and also to the particular story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which has been narrated in this Sūrah - because, through this later event, it has become absolutely clear that the obedient servants of Allah are supported and helped in so many ways when they are taken out from a deep well and made to sit on a high throne and are rescued from the threat of disgrace all the way to the zenith of the finest in grace and hon-

our, not to mention the practitioners of ill-will and deception who ultimately end up in sheer shame.

Said next is:

مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُّفْتَرٰى وَلٰكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِى بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ

It is not an invented story, rather, a confirmation of what has been before it ...,

that is, of the books revealed before it - because, this story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (Joseph) ﷵ has been mentioned in the Torah and the Injil as well. And Ḥaḍrat Wahb ibn Munabbih says: There is no Scripture which does not have the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷵ in it. (Maẓharī)

And in the last sentence of the verse, it is said: وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ وَّهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ , that is, this Qur'ān is 'an elaboration of everything' (which means that the Qur'ān has details of everything which human beings need in religion - in fields like 'Ibādāt (worship of Allah), dealings, morals, social living, government, politics and many others, including injunctions and instructions about all individual and collective concerns of human life - they are all there).

Then, it was said that this Qur'ān is 'guidance and mercy for a people who believe.' The restriction of those who have 'Īmān or Faith has been placed here because its benefit can be enjoyed by only those who believe. It goes without saying that, though the Qur'ān is nothing but mercy and guidance for disbelievers as well, but it is due to their own misconduct and disobedience that this mercy and guidance has become heavy and unwholesome for them.

Shaykh Abū al-Manṣūr has said: The purpose behind the whole Sūrah Yūsuf and the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷵ narrated therein is to comfort the Holy Prophet ﷺ. All this is to tell him that his sufferings at the hands of his people have been the lot of past prophets too. But, in the end, Allah Ta'ālā enabled his prophets to overcome - and in his case too, this is what was going to happen.

The Commentary
on
SŪRAH YŪSUF
ends here.

Sūrah Al-Ra'd

(The Thunder)

Sūrah al-Ra'd is Makkī and it has 43 verses and 6 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 4

الٓمٓرٰ قف تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ ط وَالَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ الْحَقُّ وَلٰكِنَّ
اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١﴾ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ رَفَعَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ
تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ط كُلٌّ يَّجْرِيْ
لِاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ط يُدَبِّرُ الْاَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَآءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوْقِنُوْنَ
﴿٢﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ مَدَّ الْاَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيْهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَاَنْهٰرًا ط وَمِنْ كُلِّ
الثَّمَرٰتِ جَعَلَ فِيْهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ يُغْشِي الَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ ط اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ
لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ وَفِي الْاَرْضِ قِطَعٌ مُّتَجٰوِرٰتٌ وَّجَنّٰتٌ مِّنْ
اَعْنَابٍ وَّزَرْعٌ وَّنَخِيْلٌ صِنْوَانٌ وَّغَيْرُ صِنْوَانٍ يُّسْقٰى بِمَآءٍ وَّاحِدٍ قف
وَّنُفَضِّلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلٰى بَعْضٍ فِي الْاُكُلِ ط اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ
يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾

Alif, Lām, Mīm, Rā. **These are the verses of the Book. And what has been sent down to you from your Lord is true, but most of the people do not believe.** [1]

Allah is the One who raised the heavens without pillars. You see them. Then He positioned Himself on the Throne and subjugated the sun and the moon, each one running to an appointed time. He manages all matters, making the signs plain, so that you may be sure of meeting your Lord. [2]

And He is the One who spread out the earth and made mountains and rivers therein, and of all the fruits, He created therein the pairs of two. He makes the night cover the day. Surely, in that there are signs for a people who think. [3]

And in the earth there are tracts of land neighboring each other and gardens of grapes and farms and date palms, having twin or single trunks, watered with one water. And We make some better than others in taste. Surely, in that there are signs for a people who understand. [4]

Commentary

This Sūrah is Makkī and it has a total of forty three verses. Mentioned in this Sūrah too there are subjects such as the truth and veracity of the Holy Qur'ān, Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah), Risālah (Prophethood) and answers to doubts raised about them.

The first group of letters: الٓمٓرٰ (*Alif, Lām, Mīm, Rā*) are Isolated Letters (*Al-Ḥurūf al-Muqaṭṭa'āt*) the meaning of which are known to Allah Ta'ālā alone. The Ummah has not been informed of its meaning. It is not appropriate for the Muslim Ummah at large to indulge in investigations about them.

The first verse says that the Holy Qur'ān is Divine Word, and that it is true. The word, الكتاب (Al-Kitāb: The Book) means the Qur'ān, and it is possible that the expression which follows it, that is, اَلَّذِیٓ اُنْزِلَ اِلَیْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ (And what has been sent down to you from your Lord) might as well mean the Qur'ān itself. But, the connective (the *wāw* of *'aṭf* translated as 'And') obviously requires that اَلْكِتٰب (Al-Kitāb: The Book) and اَلَّذِیٓ اُنْزِلَ اِلَیْكَ (what has been sent down to you) should be two separate things. In that case, Al-Kitāb or The Book would signify the Qur'ān and اَلَّذِیٓ اُنْزِلَ اِلَیْكَ (what has been sent down to you) would mean the revelation (Waḥy), other than that of the Qur'ān, which has been sent down to the Holy Prophet ﷺ - because, it goes without saying, that the revelation sent to

the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not restricted to the Qur'ān alone. The Qur'ān itself says: وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوٰى إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحٰى (53:3) It means: Whatever the Holy Prophet says, he does not say on his own, out of some desire of his; instead, it is a message revealed to him from Allah Ta'ala. It proves that the orders given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, other than those appearing in the Qur'ān, are also no other but those sent from Allah. The only difference between the two is that the Qur'ān is recited (*matluww*) while the later is not (*ghayr matluww*). The rationale for this difference is that the meanings and the words of the Qur'ān are both from Allah Ta'ālā, while, in the case of the rules of conduct (Aḥkām) given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in Ḥadīth - in addition to those in the Qur'ān - their meanings too are, no doubt, revealed from Allah Ta'ālā, but their words are not revealed from Him. Therefore, they cannot be recited in Ṣalāh.

Thus, the verse comes to mean that the Qur'ān and its injunctions sent down to the Holy Prophet ﷺ are all true and in them there is no room for doubt. But, most people, due to their lack of concern and deliberation, do not come around to believe in them.

That Allah Ta'ālā exists and that He is One has been emphasized in the second verse. The proof stands obvious. Look at what has been created and ponder over the matchless mastery with which everything was created. One can come to only one conclusion that their maker has absolute power over everything and that He controls all creations and universes as the master. It was said:

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِىْ رَفَعَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا

Allah is the One who raised the heavens without pillars. You see them.

On Seeing the Sky

It is generally said that the blue colour we see up is the colour of the sky. But physicists say that we see it so because of the intermingling of light and dark. Below, there is the light from the stars, and above, it is dark. As a result, the onlooker outside sees it as blue, similar to the reflection of light on deep water which appears blue. There are verses of the Qur'ān where seeing the sky has been mentioned, as has been done in this very verse which says: تَرَوْنَهَا (You see them), and the words appearing in another verse (88:18) are: وَإِلَى السَّمَآءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ '(And do you not see)

towards the sky as to how it has been raised - 88:18.)' First of all, the scientific determination of physicists does not stand counter to it because it is possible that the colour of the sky might as well be bluish, or may have some other colour, but it is sighted as blue due to the admixture of the dark behind and the light in between. Moreover, the possibility that the colour of the sky is a component of the atmosphere cannot be rejected as supported by valid proof. Then, it is also possible that places where 'seeing the sky' has been mentioned in the Qur'ān, the expression employed there may be legal and figurative aiming to establish that the existence of the sky stands proved under decisive arguments and is as good as seen. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After that, it was said:

ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ

Then He positioned Himself on the Throne ...

This mode of taking over the Seat of Power is beyond human comprehension. Understanding it is impossible. Here, it is sufficient to believe that this state of *Istiwā'* or positioning on the *'Arsh'* or Throne is something matching with the Divine Status as due, and that is what is meant here.

In the next sentence: وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَّجْرِىْ لِاَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى (and subjugated the sun and the moon, each one running to an appointed time), the word: سَخَّرَ translated as 'subjugated' means that they both are constantly doing what they have been assigned to do. Thousands of years have gone by but there never has been the least increase or decrease in their movement, nor do they get tired, nor do they ever start doing something else contrary to what they have been programmed to do. As for their 'running to an appointed time,' it could also mean that both of them are moving on to the same appointed time which stands determined as the final term called Qiyāmah or Doomsday for this entire world of our experience. Once they reach that stage in time, this whole system of theirs will reach its end.

And it could also mean that Allah Ta'ālā has determined a particular speed and orbit for every planet. It always keeps moving on its orbit at the speed set for it. The Moon completes its orbit in one month and

the Sun does it in a year.

Certainly mind-boggling is the very presence of these great planets. Then, no less astonishing is the phenomena of their flawless functioning. Here they are moving on a particular orbit maintaining a particular speed precisely and perfectly for thousands of years in a state that their machinery faces no wear and tear or breakage, nor does it require any kind of greasing or servicing. Think of the revolutionary advancements of science in human technology in our day. Can any human invention around match this model? The truth is that it is impossible to locate even a thousandth part of it anywhere in the world despite human ingenuity being at its highest pinnacle. This great system of nature is delivering a message, very loud and very clear. It is telling us that there certainly is some Being who has made, moved and maintained this system, a Being far beyond the reach of human perception and intelligence.

In Reality, It is Allah who Makes Things Work for Human Beings while Their Role in It is Nominal

After that comes the powerful statement: يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ (He manages all matters). If man so pleased with the ways and means which help make things work for him were to open his eyes, he would realize that his plans and measures could neither create nor make things in the real sense. The outcome of all his efforts and workings is no more than getting to learn how to make the best use of what has been created by Allah Taʻālā.

Besides, even the system of harnessing what is universally available for use is outside the ambit of power exercised by human beings. The reason is that human beings depend on hundreds and thousands of others like him, and on animals, and on many other live and inert members of Divine creation. These they cannot put on their jobs just by dint of their plans and efforts. This is the function of the Divine power. It has linked up everything, as if in a chain, and in a way that everything gets to be drawn into the desired action. You need to build a house. You find a whole range of servers from the architect to the builder and the finisher, hundreds of human beings offering their career and craft all set to answer your call. You need building materials. They lie stacked in stores and shops ready to be delivered where you want them. Was it within your power and control to assemble all these things on your own just by

the brute force of your money or measures and, on top of it, commission all those human beings into your service? Let us part with your individual example at this point. The fact is that this system cannot be established and activated through the force of law, even by the mightiest of the mighty government anywhere in the world. There is no doubt about the fact that the logistic support of this viably running universal system is the work of Allah Ta'ālā alone, the Ever-Living, the Self-Sustaining Sustainer of all (*Al-Ḥaiyy, Al-Qaiyyūm*). If human beings still hasten to claim that all this comes from their plans and workings, there is not much that can be said about their claim, for ignorance shall remain what it is.

The next sentence in the verse is: يُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ (making the signs plain). It may mean the verses of the Qur'ān which have been revealed by Allah Ta'ālā in details and then, it was through the Holy Prophet ﷺ that He elaborated and explained them.

And the word, الْاٰيٰتِ (*al-āyāt*) could also mean the 'signs' of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā which are spread out in the heavens and the earth, even in the very existence of human beings themselves. These are before human sight all the time and everywhere, so many and so plain.

Said in the last sentence of the verse was: لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَآءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوْقِنُوْنَ (so that you may be sure of meeting your Lord). This means that Allah Ta'ālā has initiated and activated this whole universe and its astonishing system of operation so that by pondering over it you may come to believe in and become certain of the Hereafter (*'Ākhirah*) and the Doomsday (*Qiyāmah*). The reason is that once you have pondered over the creation of this universe and its wonderous system, any likelihood of doubting that it may be beyond the power of Allah Ta'ālā to resurrect human beings in the Hereafter simply cannot be entertained. And once we realize that it is within His power, and possible, and that it has been reported by no less a person than the one about whom it is universally settled that he never said anything in his whole life which was not the truth - then, there remains no room for doubt that this phenomena is real, actual and proven.

In the next verse (3), it was said:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَرًا

And He is the One who spread out the earth and made mountains and rivers therein.

The expression: 'spread out the earth' is not contradictory of its being round - because each part of something very big and round appears to be, when looked at separately, nothing but a surface spread out - and the Qur'ān addresses common people in terms of their view of things. Since a common onlooker sees it as a spread-out surface, therefore, it was identified as such. Then, to keep it balanced and make it full of other benefits, high and heavy mountains were placed on it. Besides providing weight and balance, these mountains store and supply water for the whole creation. To accomplish this, an unimaginably big storage of water is placed on their peaks in the form of a frozen sea. This snow has no reservoir and certainly needs no monolithic structures, overhead or underground, to hold this supply of water. And the water thus stored cannot go bad or made impure. Then, nature has its own pipelines under the ground through which water is distributed all over the world. Somewhere they show up in the form of rivers flowing freely alongwith their tributeries; and at other places, wells are dug to tap water from these hidden pipelines.

In the next sentence of verse 3, it was said: وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ (and of all the fruits, He created therein the pairs of two). It means that Allah has created fruits of many kinds from this earth and made each one of two kinds: small and big, red, white, sweet and sour. It is also possible that the meaning of '*zawjayn*' (pairs) is not restricted to only two. Instead, it may be refering to several kinds the least number of which is two, therefore, it was termed as 'the pairs of two.' And it is not so unlikely that 'pairs' refers to the male and female, as we know about many trees which have males and females, for example, the date-palm and the papayah. Possibility of this being the case with other trees as well does exist, though not yet proved by relevant research about all of them.

The next sentence of the verse declares: يُغْشِي الَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ (He makes the night cover the day). It means that He brings the night after the light of the day, as if something bright has been totally screened off from sight.

The last sentence of the verse: إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ translated as 'surely, in that there are signs for a people who think,' means that there is no doubt about the fact that many signs of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā are present all over for those who care to think about and deliberate in the arrangement and system of this whole universe.

In the fourth verse it was said:

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطَعٌ مُتَجَاوِرَاتٌ وَجَنَّاتٌ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَزَرْعٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صِنْوَانٌ وَغَيْرُ صِنْوَانٍ يُسْقَىٰ بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ وَنُفَضِّلُ بَعْضَهَا عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فِي الْأُكُلِ

And in the earth there are tracts of land neighboring each other and gardens of grapes and farms and date-palms, having twin or single trunks, watered with one water. And We make some better than others in taste. Surely, in that there are signs for a people who understand.

Being pointed out here is that many tracts of land, despite being joined together, are different in their inherent properties. Some are good and soft, others are saline or hard. Some are good for farming while others grow gardens, of grapes and dates. Of the date-palms, some grow to have two trunks like other trees while others have only one.

Then, all these fruits, though they come out of the same land and are watered by the same water and are touched by the rays of the sun and the glow of the moon and the draft of different winds in a uniform manner, yet there remains among them the difference of colour and taste and size.

Despite their being in such proximity with each other, the varied difference among them is a strong and clear proof of the fact that this whole system of creation is operating under the command of someone who is wise and knows how to plan, manage and run His creation. This has nothing to do with the postulates of the theory of evolution, as some ignorant people would like to believe. If these were the outcome of the stages of material development, how could we explain the element of difference among them despite all matter being common? One fruit grows on a tract of land in one season while another grows in the other. On one single branch of one tree, the fruits could be different in kinds, sizes and tastes!

Said in the last sentence of the verse (4) was: إِنَّ فِي ذٰلِكَ لَآيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُونَ (Surely, in that there are signs for a people who understand). It means that there are in it, absolutely without doubt, many signs of the power and greatness of Allah Ta'ālā which go on to prove that He is One and that He alone is worthy of worship. By saying that these signs are 'for a people who understand,' the hint released is that those who do not think about these things are not the people of understanding, no matter how highly they are rated and advertized for their intellect and intelligence.

Verses 5 - 8

وَإِنْ تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ ءَإِذَا كُنَّا تُرٰبًا ءَإِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ۗ
أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَأُولٰٓئِكَ الْأَغْلٰلُ فِيٓ أَعْنَاقِهِمْ ۚ وَأُولٰٓئِكَ
أَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيهَا خٰلِدُونَ ﴿٥﴾ وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ
الْحَسَنَةِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمُ الْمَثُلٰتُ ۗ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو مَغْفِرَةٍ لِّلنَّاسِ
عَلٰى ظُلْمِهِمْ ۚ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَشَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٦﴾ وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
لَوْلَآ أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ ءَايَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِ ۗ إِنَّمَآ أَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ وَّلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ ﴿٧﴾ اَللّٰهُ
يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنْثٰى وَمَا تَغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ ۗ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ
عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ ﴿٨﴾

And if you wonder, then wonder is their saying, "Is it that, once we are dust, we are to be created anew?" They are those who have disbelieved in their Lord, and they are those who (shall) have shackles round their necks, and they are the people of the Fire. They shall remain there for ever. [5]

And they ask for evil to come sooner than good, while punishments have really come to pass (against people) earlier to them. And surely, your Lord is the lord of forgiveness for the people against their wrongdoing, and surely, your Lord is severe in punishing. [6]

And the disbelievers say, "Why is it that no sign has been sent down to him from his Lord?" You are but a warner.

And for every people there is a guide. [7]

Allah knows what every female carries and what the wombs decrease or increase. And everything has measure with Him: ... [8]

Commentary

Contained in the first three verses cited above (5-7) there is a refutation of the doubts expressed by the disbelievers about prophethood. Alongwith it, added there is a warning of punishment for deniers.

1. The first of the three doubts they had was about people returning to life after having been dead and according to them, the whole idea of accounting and retribution on the Day of Resurrection was improbable and irrational. On this basis, they used to belie the prophets and rejected their claim to prophethood. This doubt of theirs has been mentioned in the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān: هَلْ نَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ إِذَا مُزِّقْتُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ (34:7). Here, to ridicule the prophets, it has been said by the disbelievers: 'Come, we shall introduce you to a man who tells you that you, once dead, shall be shredded into pieces and the molecules of the earth you are made of shall also spread out all over the earth, then, at that time, you shall be created anew - Sabā, 34:7.'

The Proof of Rising Again After Death

The answer to this doubt of theirs has been given in the first of the present verses cited above (5) by saying: وَإِنْ تَعْجَبْ فَعَجَبٌ قَوْلُهُمْ ءَإِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا ءَإِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ Here, the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He is being told that he may be wondering about the attitude of the disbelievers who refuse to believe in him as a prophet of Allah despite having seen clear signs of his being a prophet, and strangely enough, at the same time, they go about believing in lifeless rocks which have neither sense nor consciousness, and who do not have the power to bring benefit to or loss on their own selves, therefore, they could hardly be expected to grant any benefit to anyone.

Certainly, far more surprising is their statement: 'Is it that, once we are dead, we shall be created anew?' The Holy Qur'ān has not spelled out the reason for this 'wonder' explicitly because, in the previous verses, by describing the wonderous manifestations of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā, it has been proved that He is the master of absolute power.

It is He who brought the entire creation from the state of non-being into the state of being. Then, He endowed into the being of everything so many varied elements of wisdom which human beings cannot even comprehend fully. From this it is obvious that the Being who can make something come into existence for the first time from total nothingness shall hardly have any difficulty in making it come into existence once again. When human beings try to make something new, they do have to remove some difficulties the first time they do it. But, when they wish to make the same thing again, things become easy.

Thus, what is really surprising is that these disbelievers do seem to believe that the Creator has created the whole universe with limitless wisdom. How then, can they consider its recreation as improbable and irrational?

Perhaps, the big problem before the deniers is what happens after death. After death, when dust returns to dust, whatever human beings are composed of gets spread out all over the earth. Winds carry them far and wide besides other causes, agents and means helping human remains get dispersed universally. Then, there will come that promised Day of Doom, the Qiyāmah. Then, they wonder, how could all that scattered dust be put together, and how, even if gathered together, can they be made to rise again (as they were)?

But, what they fail to see is that the form in which they exist at that time holds the key to their problem with comprehension. Is it not that particles from all over the world lie gathered together in them while they exist? Particles brought by water and wind from the far and near corners of the world get mingled with human intake and become part of a person's body. Most of the time the poor soul is not even aware of the fact that the morsel of food going down his or her throat comes from God knows how many areas of the world, Africa, America, or the countries of the Asian continent. Is it not that there is only One such Being who, through His wonderous wisdom and mastery of management, has made every single human being, and animal, stand to exist by assembling together scattered particles from all over the world? Now, if He can do that today, how can this become difficult for him tomorrow? Why would he not be capable of reassembling all those scattered particles back into the form they were? Specially so, when all powers of the world, the wind and

water and the rest, are subservient to Him and obey His command. If He elects to beckon the wind, the water and the atmosphere to come forth and deposit all particles they contain, would they not but obey? Why would this be any problem and why would its impossibility bother anyone?

The truth of the matter is that the disbelievers have simply failed to recognize the power of Allah Ta'ālā. They think of His Power on the analogy of their own power - though everything in the heavens and the earth and in what lies in between them does possess a comprehension and consciousness of their relative status in the scheme of the Divine arrangement of things, and they pointedly move under Divine command.

In short, what is a matter of surprise is the refusal of the disbelievers to believe in the truth of prophethood. And what is still more surprising is their refusal to believe in rising again on the day of Judgement and in having to stand to account for their deeds on that day!

After that, mention has been made of the punishment of hostile deniers of the truth. It has been said that these people not simply that they refuse to accept a prophet of Allah as such; rather what they do in reality is that they deny the very existence of their Lord. Their punishment will be that shackles will be placed round their necks and they shall live in Hell for ever.

2. The second doubt expressed by the deniers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was: 'If you are, in reality, the prophet and messenger of Allah, then, the warnings of punishments you announce against the opponents of prophets should materialize - why is it that this punishment would not come? The answer given appears in the next verse in the following words:

يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَكَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمُ الْمَثُلٰتُ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُوْ مَغْفِرَةٍ لِّلنَّاسِ عَلٰى ظُلْمِهِمْ وَاِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَشَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ

'And they ask for evil to come sooner than good (by saying: If you are a prophet, let us have your promised punishment now - which shows that they take the coming of the Divine punishment as something very far-removed or virtually impossible) although punishments have really come to pass against people earlier to them, (which have been witnessed by others.)

Now, if the punishment is to come to them, why should it be taken as so-

mething far out, or impossible? Here, the word: الْمَثُلٰت (*al-mathulāt*) is the plural form of مَثُلَة (*mathula*) and it means a punishment which puts a person in disgrace before everyone and proves to be a lesson for all others.

After that it was said that there is no doubt that your Lord is, despite the sinning and disobeying of people, the Lord of forgiveness and mercy as well. And for people who do not take advantage of this forgiveness and mercy and elect to stick to their disobedience and contumacy, then, for them He is 'severe in punishing' as well. Therefore, they should not misunderstand the attributes of Allah's forgiveness and mercy and reach the conclusion that punishment simply cannot come to them.

3. The third doubt of the disbelievers was: As for the miracles of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they had seen many of them. But, why would he not show the specific miracles demanded by them? This has been answered in the third verse (7) by saying: وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ وَّلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ (that is, in order to raise an objection against the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ, they say) 'Why has the specific miracle they demand has not been shown by him?' The answer is clear. The showing of a miracle is not within the control of a prophet or messenger. Instead, that is directly an act of God. It is He who elects to show a miracle, of whatever kind, at any time, and in His wisdom - all as determined by Him alone. He is not restricted by or burdened with anyone's demand or desire. Therefore, it was said: اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ (You are but a warner), that is, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is there only to warn disbelievers against Divine punishment - showing miracles is not his mission.

Said in the last sentence of the verse was: وَّلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ It means that there have been guides for every people among past communities. You are not the lone prophet. The standard mission of all prophets was to guide their people, warn them of the punishment of Allah, but none of them were given the power and control to show miracles. It is Allah who shows miracles of His choice whenever He chooses to do so.

Is it Necessary that a Prophet appears among every People and in every Country?

The statement: 'And for every people there is a guide' proves that no people and no region can remain unvisited by those who call towards Allah Taʿālā and guide people to the straight path. It may be some proph-

et himself, or could be someone propagating the call of his deputy - as it appears in Sūrah Yā Sīn where the initial sending of two persons as deputies to the prophet of the time to a certain people has been mentioned. Sent to carry the call and give guidance, these two persons were prophets in their own right. Then, also mentioned there is the sending of a third person to help and support them in their mission.

Therefore, this verse does not make it necessary that some prophet or messenger of Allah has also appeared in India. However, it stands proved that learned people who carried the call of the prophet and told people about his teachings came to this part of the world as well. Then, it is already common knowledge that many such 'guides' have also appeared here.

Upto this point, in the first three verses cited above, there was the answer of the doubts expressed by the deniers of prophethood. In the fourth verse (8), we see a return to the principal theme of Tauḥīd (The Oneness of Allah) which started appearing since the beginning of the Sūrah. Here, it was said: اَللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنْثٰى وَمَا تَغِيْضُ الْأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهٗ بِمِقْدَارٍ It means that Allah Ta'ālā knows everything about what every woman carries in her womb - a boy or girl, beautiful or otherwise, good or evil - and about why wombs of women decrease or increase, that is, about the time of delivery, whether early, in due time, or late.

Stated in this verse is a particular attribute of Allah Ta'ālā: That He is the Knower of the Unseen (*'Ālim al-Ghayb*). He is aware of the minutest of this entire universe and that of everything created in it, and He is most comprehensively informed of all changing conditions of each such particle. Mentioned alongwith it is the fact of all-inclusive and most perfect knowledge of every stage, every change, and every trait in the complex process of human procreation. For instance, it is He alone who has the ultimate knowledge - the most sound, the most certain - of female pregnancy - a boy or girl? Or, both? Or, nothing but the accumulation of clusters of water or gas? Whatever opinion a physician gives in this matter as based on clinical indicators and educated guess cannot be taken to be any more than strong likelihood or estimate. There are times when things turn out to be otherwise. Even Xrays and more modern Imaging techniques fail to unravel the reality of this phenomena as due. We can only say that its real and certain knowledge can be credited only to Allah

Ta'ālā. This is what has been stated in another verse of the Qur'ān which says: وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِى الْأَرْحَامِ (And He knows whatever there is in wombs - Luqmān, 31:34).

The word: تَغِيضُ (*taghīdu* : decrease) is used in the sense of becoming less or dried up. In the present verse, set against the word: تَزْدَادُ (*tazdād* : increase), it becomes clear that, at this place, it means decrease. Thus, it means that the most correct and sound knowledge of 'what the wombs decrease or increase' rests with none but Allah Ta'ālā. This 'increase' and 'decrease' could be referring to the increase or decrease in the number of children to be born, that is, whether the womb contains only one child, or has more than one. It is also possible that it may be denoting the increase or decrease in the period of actual delivery of the child, that is, in how many months, days, and hours, this pregnancy will translate into the outward physical existence of a human being. This too is something the absolutely certain knowledge of which cannot be claimed by anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā.

Tafsīr authority Mujāhid has said that the blood excreted by a woman in pregnancy becomes the cause of decrease in the size and health of the fetus. The Qur'ānic expression: تَغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامُ ('the wombs decrease') means this decrease - and the truth of the matter is that the words of the verse cover decreases of all kinds, therefore, no contradiction exists here.

Said in the last sentence of verse 8 is: كُلُّ شَىْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ (And everything has measure with Him). It means that there can be no decrease or increase from the norm set with Allah Ta'ālā. All states through which a child-to-be-born passes are also included under this statement, that is, everything pertaining to such a child lies determined with Allah who knows for how many days the child will stay in the womb, then, for how long it will continue to live in the world, and how much of sustenance it will receive. This matchless knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā is an open proof of His Oneness (*Tauḥīd*).

Verses 9 - 15

عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيْرُ الْمُتَعَالِ ﴿٩﴾ سَوَآءٌ مِّنْكُمْ مَّنْ اَسَرَّ

الْقَوْلَ وَمَنْ جَهَرَ بِهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ مُسْتَخْفٍ بِالَّيْلِ وَسَارِبٌ بِالنَّهَارِ ﴿١٠﴾
لَهُ مُعَقِّبٰتٌ مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُوْنَهُ مِنْ اَمْرِ اللّٰهِ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتّٰى يُغَيِّرُوْا مَا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ ط وَاِذَآ اَرَادَ اللّٰهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوْٓءًا
فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ ج وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهِ مِنْ وَّالٍ ﴿١١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُرِيْكُمُ
الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا وَّيُنْشِئُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ
بِحَمْدِهِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ مِنْ خِيْفَتِهِ ج وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيْبُ بِهَا مَنْ
يَّشَآءُ وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِي اللّٰهِ ج وَهُوَ شَدِيْدُ الْمِحَالِ ﴿١٣﴾ لَهُ دَعْوَةُ
الْحَقِّ ط وَالَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِ لَا يَسْتَجِيْبُوْنَ لَهُمْ بِشَيْءٍ اِلَّا
كَبَاسِطِ كَفَّيْهِ اِلَى الْمَآءِ لِيَبْلُغَ فَاهُ وَمَا هُوَ بِبَالِغِهِ ط وَمَا دُعَآءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ
اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ ﴿١٤﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ يَسْجُدُ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ طَوْعًا
وَّكَرْهًا وَّظِلٰلُهُمْ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْاٰصَالِ ﴿١٥﴾ السجدة

- the Knower of the hidden and the manifest, the Great, the High. [9]

Alike (for Him) is he, from among you, who speaks quietly and he who speaks aloud, and he who hides in the night and he who walks out in the day. [10]

For him there are angels replacing each other, before him and behind him, who guard him under the command of Allah. Surely, Allah does not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allah intends evil for a people, there is no way to turn it back, and for them there is no patron other than Him. [11]

He is the One who makes you see the lightening in fear and hope and forms the heavy clouds. [12] **And the thunder proclaims His purity with His praise, and (so do) the angels, out of His awe. and He sends the thunderbolts and strikes with it whom He wills. And they are quarrelling about Allah, and He is stern in His plan.** [13]

For Him is the prayer in truth. And those who pray to

others than Him are not responded to by them at all, but they are like one who stretches his hands towards water so that it may reach his mouth (by itself), while it is not to reach it. And the prayer of the disbelievers does not but go astray. [14]

And to Allah bow in prostration all who are in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and their shadows as well in morns and eves. [15]

Commentary

The theme of the exclusive attributes of the perfection of Allah Ta'ālā continues. Starting earlier than the verses cited above, this theme is actually an array of proofs concerning the Oneness of Allah. Onwards from the previous verse (9), it was said in the first verse (10) here: عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيْرُ الْمُتَعَالِ (- the Knower of the hidden and the manifest, the Great, the High). The word: اَلْغَيْب (*al-ghayb* : the hidden, the unseen) means that which is absent from the reach of human senses, that is, which cannot be seen with eyes, nor heard with ears, nor smelt with the nose, nor tasted with the tongue, nor sensed by touching with hands.

As for: اَلشَّهَادَة (*ash-shahādah* : manifest, present), it stands in contrast to *'al-ghayb'* or the hidden and denotes what can be found out by using human senses mentioned above. The verse means that it is the very exclusive attribute of Allah Ta'ālā that He knows everything hidden (*al-ghayb*) precisely as He knows the manifest, present and existing.

The word: اَلْكَبِيْر (*al-kabīr*) means the great and الْمُتَعَال (*al-muta'āl*) means the high, above. The sense conveyed by these two words is that He is great and far above the attributes of what He has created. Though the disbelievers and polytheists did confess to the great and exalted state of the Being of Allah Ta'ālā, in a general way, but were obviously misguided by a lack of proper perception when they took Allah Ta'ālā on the analogy of common human beings and went on to associate such attributes to him as were far too removed from His great majesty. For instance, the Jews and the Christians attributed a son for Allah, while others suggested for Allah a body and its parts just like those of human beings, and still others tried to prove direction and orientation for Him. But, the fact is that Allah is far above, absolutely pure and free of all such conditions and attributions. It should be kept in mind that, in order to emphasize His absolvement from all such human attributions, He has

repeatedly reminded us in the Qur'ān: سُبۡحَانَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُوۡنَ that is, 'Allah is pure and free from what these people attribute to Him.' (21:22; 23:91; 37:159; 37:180)

The perfection of the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā was described in عٰلِمُ الۡغَيۡبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ (the Knower of the hidden and the manifest) appearing in the first sentence (9) as well as in اَللّٰهُ يَعۡلَمُ مَا تَحۡمِلُ كُلُّ اُنۡثٰى (Allah knows what every woman carries) in the verse previous to it (8). Mentioned in the second sentence here: اَلۡكَبِيۡرُ الۡمُتَعَالِ (the great, the high) is the power and greatness of Allah for His power and reach is far beyond any human calculation. Also in the verse which follows, the same perfection in knowledge and power has been pointed to in a particular manner. There it has been said:

سَوَآءٌ مِّنۡكُمۡ مَّنۡ اَسَرَّ الۡقَوۡلَ وَمَنۡ جَهَرَ بِهٖ وَمَنۡ هُوَ مُسۡتَخۡفٍۢ بِالَّيۡلِ وَسَارِبٌۢ بِالنَّهَارِ

> Alike [for Him] is he, from among you, who speaks quitely and he who speaks aloud, and he who hides in the night and he who walks out in the day - 10.

The expression: اَسَرَّالۡقَوۡلَ (speaks quietly) is a derivation from: اَسۡرَار (*as-rār*) which means secret talk and: جَهۡر (*jahr*) means open talk. When one talks to be heard by others, it is called *jahr* and what one says for his own hearing is called *sirr*. The word: مُسۡتَخۡفٍ (*mustakhfin*) refers to one who hides, and: سَارِب (*sārib*) means one who walks his way freely.

The verse means that, because of the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā, the one who talks quietly or secretly and the one who talks loudly and openly are both equal in His sight. He hears and knows what they say, identically and uniformly. Similarly, there is the person hiding in the darkness of the night and there is another walking freely in open daylight. Both of them are alike in terms of His knowledge and power, since He knows all inward and outward conditions of both alike and His power surrounds them both alike and just no one is outside His power and control. An elaboration of this point appears in the next verse in the following words:

لَهٗ مُعَقِّبٰتٌ مِّنۡۢ بَيۡنِ يَدَيۡهِ وَمِنۡ خَلۡفِهٖ يَحۡفَظُوۡنَهٗ مِنۡ اَمۡرِ اللّٰهِ

> For him there are angels replacing each other, before him and behind him, who guard him under the command of Allah - 11.

The word: مُعَقِّبٰت (*mu'aqqibāt*) is the plural form of *mu'aqqibah*. A

group which comes concurrently behind another group is called *mu'aqqibah* or *muta'aqqibah* (hence, the translation: 'replacing each other'). The expression: مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ (*min bayni yadayhi*) literally means in between the two hands. It denotes the direction in front of a person. And: وَمِنْ خَلْفِهٖ (*wa min khalfihī*) means 'behind him.' The particle: مِنْ (*min*) in the statement: مِنْ أَمْرِ اللهِ (*min amrillāh*) has been placed here to serve as the *bā'* (باء) of causation. It has been used here in the sense of: بِأَمْرِ اللهِ (*bi amrillāh*: under the command of Allah). In some readings (*Qirā'aat*) of the Qur'ān, this word has also been reported as: بِأَمْرِ اللهِ (*bi amrillāh*). (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The verse means that for all human beings - whether one conceals what one says, or discloses it; or, similarly, one wishes to hide one's movement under the dark cover of the night, or goes about walking freely and openly in broad daylight - there are groups of angels appointed from Allah who provide a security cordon for them from in front of them and from behind them. Their hours of service and duty keep changing, so they keep replacing each other one after the other. The assignment given to them under the command of Allah is that they should protect human beings.

According to a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī, there are two groups of angels who have been appointed to guard human beings, one for the day, and another for the night. These groups meet together during the prayers of Fajr and 'Aṣr. The night guards depart after the Ṣalāh of Fajr and the daytime guards take over. Then, they leave after the Ṣalāh of 'Aṣr and the night guards resume their duty.

As reported by Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā ﷺ in a Ḥadīth of Abū Dawūd, for every human being there are guardian angels appointed to protect him or her. It is their duty to keep guarding them lest a wall or something else falls over them, or they stumble into a ditch or cave, or some animal or man causes hurt or harm to them. However, when the will of Allah itself stands enforced against a person condemned to suffer from some hardship or calamity, the guarding angels move away from the site. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

From a narration of Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī ﷺ as in a Ḥadīth of Ibn Jarīr, we know that the duty of these guarding angels is not limited to protecting human beings from worldly discomforts and hardships

only, instead, they also try to dissuade them from sins and do their best to keep them safe. They would go on infusing in their hearts the urge to do good and fear Allah, so that, through these, they would stay away from sinning. Now, if they still fall into sin by becoming neglectful of the angelic inspiration, they nevertheless pray for him and try that the sinner would somehow hasten to repent and become cleansed of the sin. After that, if the sinner fails to take any warning and refuses to correct himself, then, they write down a sin in his Book of Deeds.

In short, these guarding angels keep protecting human beings against the unwelcome happenings of both the present world and the world to come, all the time, awake or asleep. The well-known Tābi'ī, Ka'b Al-Aḥbār رحمه الله تعالى says: Should this protective Divine cordon be removed from around human beings, the Jinns would make their lives difficult. But, all these protective arrangements work only until such time as the Divine decree permits them to remain operative. Now, if Allah Ta'ālā Himself wills to let a servant of His suffer, this arrangement of protection stands dismissed.

This has been elaborated in the next verse in the following manner:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ
وَمَا لَهُم مِّن دُونِهِ مِن وَالٍ

Surely, Allah does not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allah intends evil for a people, there is no way to turn it back, and for them there is no patron other than Him - 11.

It means that Allah Ta'ālā does not change the state of peace and security enjoyed by a people into a state of distress and instability until such time that those people themselves change their deeds and ways into evil and disorder. And when a whole people change to commit themselves and their surrounding conditions into rank contumacy and disobedience, then, Allah Ta'ālā too changes His way with them. And it is obvious that, should Allah Ta'ālā Himself intend evil and punishment for anyone, then, there is no way that could be averted and there is no one who can rise to help them out against the Divine decree.

The outcome is that human beings remain actively protected by angels under the command of Allah Ta'ālā, but should a people become un-

grateful for His blessings and forsake being obedient to him only to take to evil doings and become contumacious in the end, then, the posse of protection posted by Allah Ta'ālā is called off duty. At that time, the wrath and punishment of Allah Ta'ālā descends upon them and there remains no way they could escape from these.

This explanation tells us that the 'change' referred to in the cited verse means: When a people abandon gratitude and obedience and settle for a change to worse around them, then, Allah Ta'ālā too brings about a change in His way of mercy and protection.

According to a common explanation of this verse, no positive revolution appears among a people unless they themselves do not correct conditions around them to bring about that positive revolution. There is a very popular Urdu couplet by poet Ḥālī which carries this very sense:

خدا نے آج تک اس قوم کی حالت نہیں بدلی
نہ ہو جسکو خیال آپ اپنی حالت کے بدلنے کا

To this day, God has never changed the condition of a people
Who have no plan of changing their condition themselves.

What has been said here is, no doubt, correct to a certain extent. But, this is not the sense of the Verse cited here. And its being correct too has to be viewed in terms of a general principle, that is, for a person who has no intention of correcting himself, there is no promise of help and support from Allah Ta'ālā. Instead, this promise is valid under the condition that someone would himself think and do something about it - as we learn from the noble verse: وَالَّذِيْنَ جَاهَدُوْا فِيْنَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا (that is, 'those who strive in Us, them We do lead to Our paths - (29:69)' which tells us that the pathways of guidance from Allah Ta'ālā too open up only when the urge to have such guidance is present there. But, Divine blessings are not bound by this restriction. They would, at times, come even without it.

Take our own existence and its countless blessings. These are not the outcome of our effort, nor had we ever prayed that we be given such a presence with eyes, nose, ears and rest of the most perfect body. These are wonderful blessings - and we have them without having to ask for

them. However, the right to deserve blessings and to become worthy recepients of the fruits of the Divine promise cannot be received without making one's own effort to earn it - and should a people keep waiting for Divine rewards without putting in the due effort and deed, it would amount to nothing but self-deception.

After that, it was said in verse 12: هُوَالَّذِىْ يُرِيْكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا وَّيُنْشِىءُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ It means that it is Allah Ta'ālā Who makes you see the lightening and the thunder which can become a matter of fear for human beings lest it may destroy what it strikes. Then, it has a dimension of hope too by raising expectations that rains may follow the thunder, rains which support animal and human lives. And then, He is the One who lifts heavy and huge clouds up from the surface of the sea as the monsoons and carries these water-laden clouds post-haste through the atmosphere to places near and far off and has them deliver their rains over lands He chooses in accordance with His decree and corresponding to the measure determined by Him.

In the next verse (13), it was said: وَيُسَبِّحُ الرَّعْدُ بِحَمْدِهٖ وَالْمَلٰئِكَةُ مِنْ خِيْفَتِهٖ (And the thunder proclaims His purity with His praise, and [so do] the angels, out of His awe). In Arabic usage, the word: اَلرَّعْد (Ar-Ra'd) refers to the sound of the clouds generated by their collision. The sense of تَسْبِيْح (*Tasbīḥ*: the glorification of Allah) mentioned here is that of the same Tasbīḥ about which it has been said in another verse of the Qur'ān: وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَىْءٍ اِلاَّ يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهٖ وَلٰكِنْ لاَّ تَفْقَهُوْنَ تَسْبِيْحَهُمْ 'And there is nothing in the heavens and the earth which does not glorify Allah, but they do not understand their glorification' - (17:44).

And it appears in some narrations of Ḥadīth that Ar-Ra'd is the name of the angel appointed to bring rains. In terms of this sense, the reciting of Tasbīḥ is obvious.

Said in the next sentence 12 is: وَيُرْسِلُ الصَّوَاعِقَ فَيُصِيْبُ بِهَا مَنْ يَّشَآءُ (And He sends the thunderbolts and strikes with it whom He wills). The word: الصَّوَاعِق (*aṣ-ṣawā'iq*) is the plural form of *aṣ-ṣā'iqah* which is the name of the thunderbolt that strikes the earth. The sense of the verse is that it is Allah who sends these thunderbolts down upon the earth and, with these, He strikes whom He wills.

The last sentence of this verse is: وَهُمْ يُجَادِلُوْنَ فِى اللّٰهِ وَهُوَ شَدِيْدُ الْمِحَالِ (And

they are quarrelling about Allah, and He is stern in His plan). The word: المِحَال (*al-miḥāl*: with Kasrah on the initial letter *Mīm*) has been used here in the triple sense of stratagem and plan, and retribution and punishment, and in the sense of power as well. The verse means that (it is in the background of what has been stated above) that these people are busy with debates and altercations about the truth of Allah's Oneness - despite the fact that Allah Ta'ālā has the ultimate power whose plan overtakes all and nothing works against it.

Verses 16 - 17

قُلْ مَنْ رَّبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ۗ قُلْ اَفَاتَّخَذْتُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ
اَوْلِيَآءَ لَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ لِاَنْفُسِهِمْ نَفْعًا وَّلَا ضَرًّا ۗ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْاَعْمٰى
وَالْبَصِيْرُ ۙ اَمْ هَلْ تَسْتَوِي الظُّلُمٰتُ وَ النُّوْرُ ۚ اَمْ جَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ
خَلَقُوْا كَخَلْقِهٖ فَتَشَابَهَ الْخَلْقُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ قُلِ اللّٰهُ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
وَّهُوَ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿١٦﴾ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَسَالَتْ اَوْدِيَةٌ ۢ
بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَّابِيًا ۗ وَمِمَّا يُوْقِدُوْنَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ
ابْتِغَآءَ حِلْيَةٍ اَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِّثْلُهٗ ۗ كَذٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ ۗ
فَاَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَآءً ۚ وَاَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۗ
كَذٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ الْاَمْثَالَ ﴿١٧﴾

Say, "Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?" Say, "Allah." Say, "Have you, then, taken others than Him as protectors who possess no power to cause benefit or harm even to themselves?" Say, "Is it that a blind person and a sighted one are equal, or that (all sorts of) the darkness and the light are alike?" Or, have they made partners with Allah who created as He created, and thus the creation seemed to them alike? Say, "Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the All-Dominant." [16]

He sent down water from the heavens, so the *wādīs* flowed according to their measure, and the flood carried bulging foam. And a similar foam comes up from

what they melt in fire to obtain ornaments or other objects. This is how Allah depicts the truth and the untruth. As for the foam, it gets to be thrown away, while that which benefits people remains on the earth. This is how Allah brings out the parables. [17]

Commentary

The outcome of both parables is that foam does appear prominent for a while on the real thing, but it finally gets to be thrown away and the real thing remains. Similar is the case of the false. Though the false may, for a short while, appear to have overcome the true, but the false is finally subdued and eliminated and that which is true remains and stands manifestly proven. (Tafsīr Al-Jalālayn)

Verses 18 - 24

لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَجَابُوْا لِرَبِّهِمُ الْحُسْنٰى ط وَالَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَهٗ لَوْ اَنَّ
لَهُمْ مَّا فِي الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا وَّمِثْلَهٗ مَعَهٗ لَافْتَدَوْا بِهٖ ط اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ
الْحِسَابِ لا وَمَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ط وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٨﴾ اَفَمَنْ يَّعْلَمُ اَنَّمَآ
اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ هُوَ اَعْمٰى ط اِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ اُولُوا
الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يُوْفُوْنَ بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا يَنْقُضُوْنَ الْمِيْثَاقَ ﴿٢٠﴾
وَالَّذِيْنَ يَصِلُوْنَ مَآ اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖٓ اَنْ يُّوْصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُوْنَ
سُوْٓءَ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢١﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ وَاَقَامُوا
الصَّلٰوةَ وَاَنْفَقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ سِرًّا وَّعَلَانِيَةً وَّيَدْرَءُوْنَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ
السَّيِّئَةَ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٢٢﴾ جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ يَّدْخُلُوْنَهَا وَمَنْ
صَلَحَ مِنْ اٰبَآئِهِمْ وَاَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيّٰتِهِمْ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَدْخُلُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ
كُلِّ بَابٍ ﴿٢٣﴾ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٢٤﴾

For those who obey their Lord there is the best of rewards. And those who do not obey Him (shall be in a plight that) even if they possess all that is on earth, rather twice as much, they would offer it in ransom. For

these there is the worst of reckoning. And their abode is the Hell, and it is an evil bed. [18]

Now, is the one who knows that whatever has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth, equal to one who is blind? Only the people of understanding respond to the advice --- [19] **those who fulfill (their) pledge with Allah and do not break the covenant,** [20] **and those who maintain the relations Allah has commanded to be maintained and fear their Lord and are frightful of evil reckoning,** [21] **and those who observe patience in order to seek the pleasure of their Lord and establish Ṣalāh and spend from what We have given to them secretly and openly, and repel evil with good. Those are the ones for whom there is the ultimate abode,** [22] **the eternal gardens they enter, and the righteous of their fathers, spouses, and progeny as well. And the angels shall enter onto them from every gate** [23] **(saying) "Peace on you for the patience you observed. So, good is the ultimate abode."** [24]

Commentary

Truth and Falsehood were explained through parables in verses appearing previous to those cited above. Now, in the present verses, there is a description of the distinguishing marks and attributes of the people of Truth and the people of Falsehood, alongwith a description of their good and bad deeds, and their reward and punishment.

The first verse (18) carries a description of the good return reserved for those who obey Divine injunctions and act in accordance with them, and conversely, of the severe punishment for those who disobey them and act negatively.

In the second verse (19), the two groups have been identified as the sighted and the blind through a parable and, at the end, it was said: إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ that is, 'only the people of understanding respond to the advice.' It means what has been exemplified here is, though, fairly clear and obvious, yet it can only be understood and appreciated by those who have their essential reason intact with them. Those who have their faculty of reason all impaired by heedlessness and disobedience cannot understand a difference so great.

From the third verse (20) begins a description of particular deeds and

marks which distinguish the two groups. Taken up first are the attributes of those who believe in and obey Divine injunctions. The initial attribute mentioned is: الَّذِيْنَ يُوْفُوْنَ بِعَهْدِ اللهِ (those who fulfill [their] pledge with Allah). It covers all promises and pledges taken by Allah Ta'ālā from His servants, the very first of which was the Divine Covenant taken in eternity before an assembly of all spirits, that is: أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ (Am I not your Lord?) in answer to which, everyone had unanimously said: بَلٰى (Yes, why not? Surely, You are our Lord). Similarly, the different pledges taken by Allah Ta'ālā regarding the obedience of Divine injunctions, fulfillment of assigned duties, abstinence from things impermissible as ordered by Allah have been mentioned in different verses of the Qur'ān.

The second attribute mentioned here is: وَلَا يَنْقُضُوْنَ الْمِيْثَاقَ (and they do not break the covenant). It includes all covenants, including pledges between Allah and His servants which have been pointed out right here in the first sentence as: عَهْدُاللهِ (their pledges with Allah). Also included here are the pledges given by the people of a religious community to their prophet or messenger, as well as the contracts and pacts which one human being enters into with the other.

Based on a narration by Sayyidnā 'Awf ibn Mālik ﷺ, Abū Dāwūd has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ took a pledge (*'Ahd and Bay'ah*) from the noble Ṣaḥābah that they would not associate anyone with Allah, and perform Ṣalāh punctually five times every day, and obey their authorities, and would never stretch their hands for anything before any human being.

People who were parties to this solemn pledge were so true to their word of honour that, should they happen to drop their whip from their hand while riding, they would never ask anyone to pick up and hand over that whip to them. Instead of that, they would get down from their mount and pick it up themselves.

That the noble Ṣaḥābah did so was the result of the great feeling of love and the passionate desire to obey their master in their hearts. Otherwise, it was fairly obvious that he had never intended to stop them from making a request of this nature. This is very much like what happened when Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ was entering the Masjid on a certain occasion. He saw that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was addressing a

gathering. It was only by chance that, at the time he was entering the Masjid, the words: 'Sit down' happened to have been uttered by the Holy Prophet ﷺ as part of his address. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ knew that this never meant that anyone, no matter where, should sit down on the street, passage way, or a spot not suitable for the purpose. But, such was his passion for obedience that it did not allow him to take even one step forward from outside the Masjid gate where he was. Just as these words of his master struck his ears, he sat down right there.

The third attribute of the obedient servants of Allah Ta'ālā stated here is: وَالَّذِيْنَ يَصِلُوْنَ مَآ اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖٓ اَنْ يُّوْصَلَ (and those who maintain the relations Allah has commanded to be maintained). According to the well-known explanation of this verse, it means that these people maintain relationships and keep doing what needs to be done in this matter as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā. Some commentators have explained it by saying that these people conjoin righteous deeds with faith, or synchronize their initial faith in the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Qur'ān with faith in past prophets and their books.

The fourth attribute has been identified as: وَيَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ (and fear their Lord). The use of the word: خَشْيَه (*khashyah*) rather than خَوْف (*khawf*) indicates that their 'fear' of Allah is not the kind of fear one naturally has when facing some beast or dangerous man. Instead of that, this fear is like the habitual fear children have of their parents, and students of their teacher, for that is no fear of being harmed or hurt by them. Instead, such fear is grounded in love and esteem because of which one apprehends lest something said or done may become displeasing and repugnant in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, whenever the fear of Allah finds mention in an occasion of praise and glorification, generally the word used there is Khashyah because Khashyah is the name of the fear which emerges out of love and esteem. Therefore, in the next sentence, where the fear of strict reckoning has been mentioned, the word used is not Khashyah, instead the word used there is fear as such. It was said: وَيَخَافُوْنَ سُوْٓءَ الْحِسَابِ (and they are frightful of evil reckoning). 'Evil reckoning' denotes reckoning which is strict and minute. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها has said: It is Divine Mercy alone which can bring salvation for human beings when things are forgone and forgiven summarily at the time the reckoning of deeds takes place. Otherwise, anyone who is made

to account for everything said and done, cannot escape from punishment. It is virtually impossible because who is there to claim that he or she has never made a mistake or committed a sin? So, this fear of having to face strict reckoning of deeds is the fifth attribute of righteous and obedient people.

The sixth attribute has been stated as: وَالَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ (and those who observe patience in order to seek the pleasure of their Lord).

The meaning of: صَبْر (*Ṣabr*) in the Arabic language is fairly general as compared with the sense which has become popular in the Urdu language (in which this Commentary was orginally written). There it means to be patient under distress. (Regretfully, the common counterpart, patience, used for '*Ṣabr*' in English is also not free of its limitations, and does not carry the full and rich sense of the original Arabic). The reason is that the real meaning of Ṣabr is that one does not become upset under the stress of what is temperamentally unpalatable and, in fact, keeps doing what must be done resolutely and steadfastly. Therefore, it is divided into two kinds. One of them is Perseverance with Obedience (صَبْرٌ عَلَى الطَّاعَةِ), that is, being steadfast while observing and implementing the injunctions of Allah Ta'ālā. The other kind is Perseverance againt Disobedience and Sin (صَبْرٌ عَنِ الْمَعْصِيَةِ), that is, being steadfast in refraining from and staying safe against sins.

The restriction of: اِبْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ (in order to seek the pleasure of their Lord) tells us that Ṣabr or patience, in its general sense, is no matter of merit by itself because there comes a time when even the most impatient person somehow gets to become reconciled with his or her lot after all. So, Ṣabr or patience which is not willful has no worth or merit, nor does Allah Ta'ālā ever obligate anyone with something which is beyond his control. Therefore, in Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: اَلصَّبْرُ عِنْدَ الصَّدْمَةِ الْأُوْلٰى , that is, 'the real and trustworthy Ṣabr is none but the one which is taken to immediately at the initial stage of shock. Otherwise, later on, sooner or later, one is left with no choice but to become reconciled and patient. As against this, the Ṣabr which is worthy of all praise is the Ṣabr under which one elects, by choice, to tolerate and be patient about what is contrary to his or her liking - whether it is the fulfillment of what one is obligated with, or is the abstinence from what is unlawful or reprehensible.

Therefore, if someone entered the house of somebody else with the intention of theft, but did not find the opportunity to do so, thus, having been left with no other choice but to observe patience, he returned back. Now, this Ṣabr or patience, non-voluntary as it is, is no act deserving praise or reward. It brings Thawāb or reward only when one abstains from sin because of the fear of Allah and the desire to seek His pleasure.

The seventh attribute is: اَقَامُوا الصَّلٰوةَ (establish Ṣalāh). The Qur'ānic expression for 'establish Ṣalāh' means to perform Ṣalāh with all its attending conditions and rules of etiquette and the essential humbleness of heart. It is not just the 'saying' of prayers as a matter of routine. Therefore, speaking generally, the command to perform, offer, or make prayers appearing in the Holy Qur'ān has been given with the specific word: Iqāmah, usually rendered as 'establish' in English, though still wanting.

The eighth attribute is: وَاَنْفَقُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ سِرًّا وَّ عَلَانِيَةً (and spend from what We have given to them secretly and openly). The hint given here is that the amount of Zakāh prescribed by Allah Ta'ālā is not something He is asking of you, in fact, what He is asking for is a certain portion of what He has given to you, and that too is limited to the insignificant measure of 2½ percent. Naturally, giving this much should naturally be no cause of reluctance for you.

The adverb of: سِرًّا وَّعَلَانِيَةً (secretly and openly) with the command to spend wealth in the way of Allah tells us that concealment is not always the only Sunnah method in charities - instead, on occasions, doing it openly is also correct and sound. Therefore, religious scholars have said that the giving of obligatory Zakāh and charities openly is better and more merit-worthy. Doing it secretly is not appropriate so that other people could be pursuaded and prompted to do the same. However, the giving of voluntary charities (Ṣadaqāt) secretly is certainly better and more merit-worthy. Aḥādīth in which giving secretly has been commended are concerned with such optional and voluntary charities.

The ninth attributes stated here is: يَدْرَءُوْنَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ (and repel evil with good). The sense is that these people repel evil with good, enmity with friendship and injustice with forgiveness, and do not retaliate by doing what is evil in return for evil done. Some commentators have explained the meaning by saying that these people repel sin by acting righ-

teously, that is, if some sin gets to be committed by them, they follow it up by repentance, obedience and worship so punctually and abundantly that the past sin is obliterated. According to Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ advised Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ؓ: If, after evil, you do good, it will obliterate evil. It means that should a person reflect, feel ashamed of having committed a sin, repent and make amends by following it up with a good deed, then, this good deed will wash off his or her past sin. Just going ahead and doing something good without first having felt ashamed and having repented after the committment of sin is not sufficient for the forgiveness of that sin.

After having recounted these nine attributes of the obedient servants of Allah Ta'ālā, the reward promised for them is: أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ (Those are the ones for whom there is the ultimate abode). The word: الدَّار (*ad-dār*: abode, home) refers to the abode of the 'Ākhirah or Hereafter, that it, the prosperity and success of the 'Ākhirah is for them. Some commentators have said that 'abode' at this place means the abode of the mortal world the sense of which is that good people, though they have to face hardships too in this mortal world, but, finally, they are the ones who succeed in this mortal world as well.

Onwards from this point there comes the description of the same 'ultimate abode' when it is said that these shall be eternal gardens they shall enter. The word: عَدْن (*'Adn*) means to abide, settle down permanently. The sense is that no one shall ever be expelled from these gardens, instead, they shall be there eternally. Some commentators have said that 'Adn is the name of the midmost of the Paradise which is also the most superior of its many stations.

After that, mentioned there is yet another reward for these people and this reward shall not remain restricted to those people in person. In fact, even their fathers, wives and children shall get their share in it - subject to the condition that they be good in deeds, the lowest degree of which is that they be Muslims. It means that the personal conduct of their fathers and wives was, though not good enough to have enabled them to arrive at this level of success, yet it would be because of the consideration and *barakah* of the accepted servants of Allah that they too shall be admitted to that high station.

After that, the text states the additional honour they shall have in their 'ultimate abode' of the Hereafter when the angels emerge from each of its doors greeting them with Salām and telling them that their Ṣabr brings to them eternal security from all hardships and that they can themselves see how good is the ultimate abode of the 'Ākhirah.

Verses 25 - 30

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَنْقُضُوْنَ عَهْدَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيْثَاقِهٖ وَيَقْطَعُوْنَ مَآ اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖٓ اَنْ
يُّوْصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الدَّارِ
﴿٢٥﴾ اَللّٰهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَقْدِرُ وَفَرِحُوْا بِالْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ اِلَّا مَتَاعٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ قُلْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَهْدِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ
مَنْ اَنَابَ ﴿٢٧﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوْبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ اَلَا بِذِكْرِ
اللّٰهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوْبُ ﴿٢٨﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ طُوْبٰى لَهُمْ
وَحُسْنُ مَاٰبٍ ﴿٢٩﴾ كَذٰلِكَ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ فِيْٓ اُمَّةٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهَآ اُمَمٌ
لِّتَتْلُوَا عَلَيْهِمُ الَّذِيْٓ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِالرَّحْمٰنِ قُلْ هُوَ
رَبِّيْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَاِلَيْهِ مَتَابِ ﴿٣٠﴾

And those who break their pledge with Allah after it has been made binding, and cut off the relations Allah has commanded to be joined, and make mischief in the earth - those are the ones for whom there is the curse, and for them there is the evil abode. [25]

Allah expands the provision for whom He wills and narrows it. And they are happy with the worldly life, and the worldly life, compared to the Hereafter, is nothing but a little enjoyment. [26]

And the disbelievers say, "Why is it that no sign has been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say, "Allah lets go astray whom He wills and gives guidance to the ones

who turn to Him, [27] **the ones who believe and their hearts are peaceful with the remembrance of Allah. Listen, the hearts find peace only with the remembrance of Allah."** [28]

Those who believe and do good deeds, for them there is the bliss and a good place to return. [29]

Thus We have sent you, amidst a community before which many communities have passed away, so that you may recite to them what We have revealed to you, and they disbelieve in Al-Raḥmān (the Most-Merciful Allah). Say, "He is my Lord. There is no god but He. In Him I place my trust, and to Him is my return." [30]

Commentary

At the beginning of the section, human beings were divided into two kinds - those who are obedient to Allah Ta'ālā and those who are disobedient to Him. Then, enumerated there were some attributes and signs of the obedient servants of Allah and mention was made of the best of rewards for them in the Hereafter.

Now, in the present verses, stated there are the attributes and signs, and punishments, of the other kind of people. One trait of character these disobedient and contumacious people have been reported to have is: ٱلَّذِينَ يَنقُضُونَ عَهْدَ ٱللَّهِ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مِيثَٰقِهِۦ (And those who break [their] pledge with Allah after it has been made binding). Included here is the pledge out of the pledges given to Allah concerning His unshared Lordship and Oneness by all spirits created by Him. The disbelievers and polytheists broke this pledge when they came into this world and consequently took to hundreds and thousands of lords and objects of worship all joined up with the pristine divinity of Allah Ta'ālā.

And also included here are all pledges faithfulness to which becomes binding on human beings as part of the great pledge of: لَا إِلٰهَ إِلاَّ اللّٰهُ (There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah). The reason is that the Kalimah Ṭayyibah, that is: لَا إِلٰهَ إِلاَّ اللّٰهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (Lā' Ilāha Illallāhu Muḥammadur Rasūlullāh ﷺ : There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah - Muhammad is the messenger of Allah) is, indeed, the symbol of a great pledge under which fall the obedience to all injunctions and rules of conduct taught by Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger, and it also covers the

pledge to abstain from things which have been prohibited. Therefore, when a human being deviates from any injunction made binding by Allah or deviates from the command given by His Messenger, he or she commits a breach of trust by breaking this pledge to have faith.

The second trait of these disobedient people has been identified as: وَيَقْطَعُوْنَ مَآ اَمَرَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖٓ اَنْ يُّوْصَلَ (and cut off relations Allah has commanded to be joined). Included here is the relationship human beings have with Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger, may peace be upon him, and the blessings of Allah. The cutting of this relationship simply means the contravention of their commands. And, of course, included here are connections based on relationships the maintainenance of which and the fulfillment of whose rights has been stressed upon time and again in the Holy Qur'ān.

Those who disobey Allah Ta'ālā would not hesitate in sundering even these relations and rights built around them - for instance, they would not fulfill the rights of their mother, father, brother, sister, neighbour, and others in that category while they are rights which must be fulfilled by all human beings as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger.

The third trait of such people has been stated as: وَيُفْسِدُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ (and make mischief on the earth). This third trait is actually the outcome of the first two, that is, they disregard pledges given, whether given to Allah or to His servants, just have no consideration of anyone's rights or relationships. It is obvious that such deeds of these people will cause pain and loss to others, even become the cause of mutul fighting and killing. This is the worst 'Fasād' or disorder or mischief they inflict on this earth.

After having described these three traits of the disobedient and contumacious people, the punishment identified for them is: اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الدَّارِ (those are the ones for whom there is the curse, and for them there is the evil abode). The word: لَعْنَة (*al-la'nah*: translated here as 'curse') means to be removed far away from the mercy of Allah, and become deprived of it. And it goes without saying that being far removed from His mercy is the most punishing of all punishments and certainly the hardest of all hardships.

Injunctions and Rules of Guidance

Special injunctions and rules of guidance concerning many depart-

ments of human life appear in the verses 20 to 24. Either explicit or implied, they are as follows:

1. From: اَلَّذِيْنَ يُوْفُوْنَ بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا يَنْقُضُوْنَ الْمِيْثَاقَ (those who fulfill [their] pledge with Allah and do not break the covenant - 20) it stands established that abiding by a pledge given or contract made with someone is a binding obligation which must be fulfilled, and any contravention of which is Ḥarām (forbidden, unlawful) - whether that pledge be related to Allah and His Messenger, as the pledge of Faith and the pledge to maintain relationships with those created by Allah, or it may be a pledge related to any Muslim or Kāfir. Pledge-Breaking is Ḥarām under all conditions.

2. From: وَالَّذِيْنَ يَصِلُوْنَ مَآ اَمَرَاللّٰهُ بِهٖٓ اَنْ يُّوْصَلَ (and those who maintain the relations Allah has commanded to be maintained - 21) we learn that Islam does not teach abandonment of relationships in some monastic manner. Instead of that, maintaining necessary relations and fulfilling their due rights has been made necessary in Islam. As for the rights of parents, children, wife, sisters, brothers and the rights of other relatives and neighbours, these have been made obligatory by Allah Ta'ālā on every human being. They cannot be ignored in favour of voluntary acts of worship, not even to devote time for some religious service needed by the community. This is not permissible. How could it become permissible to forget them and get busy doing other things?

As for maintaining the bonds of family relationships, taking care of them, and fulfilling their due rights, these have been stressed upon in many verses of the Holy Qur'ān.

In a Ḥadīth of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim based on a narration of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: A person who hopes to have extended means of living and *barakah* in things done must maintain relations (*Ṣilatur-Raḥim*). It simply means that one should take care of those he is closely related with and help and support them within personal capability.

And Sayyidnā Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī ﷺ says that a rustic Arab villager called upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ at his home and asked him: 'Just tell me what should I do to come closer to Paradise and stay away from Hell.' He said: 'Worship Allah. Take no partners with Him. Establish Ṣalāh. Give Zakāh. And maintain relations.' (Al-Baghawī)

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﵄ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: 'Ṣilatur-Raḥim' (maintaining relations) does not simply mean that you return the favour done by a relative, that is, if he has done a favour to you, you do a favour to him. Instead, real Ṣilatur-Raḥim (the ideal form of maintaining relations) is that even if your relative fails to maintain relations with you, yet you, on your part, only for the sake of Allah, maintain relations with him, and do favours to him.'

It was due to the importance of fulfilling the rights of relatives and maintaining relations with them that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Preserve your family trees through which you would preserve your family ties and you would be able to fulfill their rights.' Then he said: 'This rule of maintaining relations has its advantages. It generates mutual love, puts *barakah* in wealth which increases, and puts *barakah* in years of life too.' (Tirmidhī)

It appears in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'Most commendable is the act of maintaining relations when a person maintains the same relations with the friends of his dead father, as they were during his lifetime.

3. The statement: وَالَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَآءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ (in order to seek the pleasure of their Lord - 22) makes us realize that the merits of Ṣabr (patience) which have appeared in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and which tell us that the patient person has the good fortune of having Allah Ta'ālā with him, and of His help and support, and that countless returns and rewards wait for him or her. But, all this happens only when one observes patience for the good pleasure of Allah Ta'ālā - otherwise, everyone reaches a point in time when, sooner or later, one gets to become reconciled to his or her lot.

As explained earlier, the real meaning of Ṣabr (translated here as 'to observe patience') is to control one's self and remain steadfast which can take different forms. First of all, one should observe patience, not become upset under the stress of hardship and pain, not become disappointed, rather keep Allah Ta'ālā in sight and keep hoping. Secondly, one should observe patience in carrying out acts of obedience to Allah in a way that one remains sure of staying on that track steadfastly, even if

the adherence to Divine injunctions appears to be hard on one's self. Thirdly, one should observe patience against what is evil and sinful - even if the desiring self demands that the road to evil be taken, but one should resist and refuse to take the road to evil because of the fear of Allah.

4. From: وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ سِرًّا وَّعَلَانِيَةً (and spend from what We have given to them secretly and openly - 22), we learn that spending in the way of Allah secretly and openly is correct whichever way it is done. However, it is better that obligatory charities (*wājib ṣadaqāt*) such as Zakāh and Ṣadaqātul-Fiṭr etc., be paid openly so that other Muslim are also prompted to do the same. As for voluntary charities (*nafl ṣadaqāt*) which are not obligatory should be paid secretly so that one can stay safe from scruples of hypocricy and pulls of recognition.

5. The statement: يَدْرَءُوْنَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ (and repel evil with good) tells us that getting rid of evil is certainly a rational and physical imperative, but evil for evil is not the method practiced in Islam. Instead, the teaching of Islam is: Repel evil with good. Whoever has inflicted injustice upon you, on your part you deal with him justly. Whoever has not fulfilled your due right, on your part you fulfill his right. Whoever releases his anger on you, on your part you respond to him with forbearance and tolerance. The inevitable result of this pattern of response would be that enemies would turn into friends and the wicked into the righteous before you.

Another sense of this sentence is that one should make amends for a sin by performing an act of obedience, that is, if you ever get to commit some sin, repent immediately and then get busy with the 'Ibādah of Allah Ta'ālā. This will cause your past sin to be forgiven.

As reported by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: When a sin happens to have been committed by you, follow it up with a good deed. This will wash that sin off (narrated by Aḥmad with sound authority, Maẓharī). The condition attached to this good deed is that one must first repent from the past sin and then do the good deed.

Said in the next verse (23) is: جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ يَّدْخُلُوْنَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ اٰبَآئِهِمْ وَاَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيّٰتِهِمْ It means that servants of Allah who are righteous and accepted will certainly have the honour of being in Jannah, and it will be in con-

sideration of them that their parents, wives and children will also share the honour with them. However, the condition is that these people should be righteous, that is, believers and Muslims - not Kāfir, though not at par with such pious elder in their good deeds. But, because of the *barakah* of this pious elder, Allah Ta'ālā shall make these people reach the same station in Paradise which is the station of this pious elder as said in another verse: اَلْحَقْنَابِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ that is, 'We shall make the progeny of Our righteous servants be with them - 52:21'

This tells us that relationship with pious elders, whether of lineage, kinship or friendship, shall be of benefit in the Hereafter as well - of course, subject to the condition of *'Īmān* (Faith).

6. From verse 24: سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ (Peace be upon you for the patience you observed. So, good is the ultimate abode) we find out that the salvation of the Hereafter and the high ranks of the Paradise are all the outcome of man's patient handling of the trials of life in this mortal world where he keeps insisting on fulfilling all rights of Allah Ta'ālā and His servants due on him or her and keeps compelling one's desiring self to abstain from acting disobediently to Him.

Finally, if we consider the statement in verse 25, that is: أُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوْٓءُ الدَّارِ (those are the ones for whom there is the curse, and for them there is the evil abode), we would recall that verses previous to it told us about the reward of His obedient servants - that their home will be in Paradise, angels would greet them with Salām, and tell them that the eternal blessings of Paradise are the direct result of their patience, fortitude and obedience. Similarly, in the verse cited above, announced is the end of the disobedient and the contumacious - that they are under the curse of Allah, that is, they are far removed from His mercy and that they have waiting for them an evil abode in Hell. This helps us realize that the breaking of pledges given and the severence of the bonds of kinship is the cause of Divine curse and consignment to Hell. May Allah keep all of us protected from such a fate.

Verses 31 - 33

وَلَوْ اَنَّ قُرْاٰنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ اَوْ قُطِّعَتْ بِهِ الْاَرْضُ اَوْ كُلِّمَ بِهِ

الْمَوْتٰى ؕ بَلْ لِّلّٰهِ الْاَمْرُ جَمِيْعًا ؕ اَفَلَمْ يَايْـَٔسِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ لَّوْ يَشَآءُ
اللّٰهُ لَهَدَى النَّاسَ جَمِيْعًا ؕ وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا تُصِيْبُهُمْ بِمَا
صَنَعُوْا قَارِعَةٌ اَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيْبًا مِّنْ دَارِهِمْ حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَ وَعْدُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيْعَادَ ﴿۳۱﴾ وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَاَمْلَيْتُ
لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ثُمَّ اَخَذْتُهُمْ قف فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ ﴿۳۲﴾ اَفَمَنْ هُوَ قَآئِمٌ
عَلٰى كُلِّ نَفْسٍۢ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ ج وَجَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ ؕ قُلْ سَمُّوْهُمْ ؕ اَمْ
تُنَبِّـُٔوْنَهٗ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِى الْاَرْضِ اَمْ بِظَاهِرٍ مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ ؕ بَلْ زُيِّنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا مَكْرُهُمْ وَصُدُّوْا عَنِ السَّبِيْلِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَالَهٗ مِنْ هَادٍ
﴿۳۳﴾

And even if there were a Qur'ān wherewith the mountains could be moved, or the earth could be split apart, or wherewith the dead are spoken to, (they would not believe). But all the judgements are of Allah. Are the believers not aware that, if Allah wills, He would bring all the people to the right path? And the disbelievers shall keep receiving disaster for what they did, or it will visit somewhere close to their homes, until Allah's promise comes to pass. Surely, Allah does not back out on His promise. [31]

And Messengers have been mocked at before you, so I let the disbelievers go on for a while. Then I seized them. So, how was My punishment? [32]

Is then He, who is watchful over everyone and over whatever he earns (not present?) while they have made partners with Allah. Say, "Give their names. Is it that you are informing Him of something on earth He does not know, or of just empty words?" But, their ill- designs have been made alluring for the disbelievers, and they have been barred from the Path. And the one whom Allah deprives of guidance, for him there is no one to guide. [33]

Commentary

Clear proofs of Islām being the true religion and the Holy Prophet ﷺ

being the true prophet were there before the disbelievers of Makkah. They could see the signs from every department of his life, and from his many miracles, openly and comprehensively. The chief of the disbelievers, Abū Jahl had already declared that they stood in competition with the tribe of Banū Hāshim. How could they ever accept their superiority in a matter so crucial - that the Messenger of Allah had to rise from among them? So, let them say what they have to say, and let them show whatever signs they must show. As for them, they were not going to believe in him under any condition whatsoever. Therefore, bent on confrontation, they lost no opportunity to display their obstinacy asking absurd questions and making unreasonable demands. The present verses too have been revealed in response to a question asked by Abū Jahl and his accomplices.

According to Tafsīr al-Baghawī, once the disbelievers of Makkah, Abū Jahl ibn Hishām and 'Abdullāh ibn Umaiyyah among them, came to the Baytullah and sat down on its rear side. They sent the later to the Holy Prophet ﷺ with some demands. He said to him: If you want that your people and all of us accept you as a Messenger of Allah and follow you, then we have some demands. Fulfill them through your Qur'ān and we all shall embrace Islam.

One of the demands was that the land of Makkah was too short on space. What they have is a long stretch of land surrounded by mountains on all sides in which there is no room for cultivation and farming and no place to grow fruits or provide other needs. So, they asked him: You move these mountains farther away through your miracle so that the land area of Makkah becomes more extensive. Reminding him of his own saying they said that mountains were subjugated for Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام - when he recited the praises of Allah, the mountains did the same with him. And they reminded him again that he was no less a person than Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام in the sight of Allah.

The second demand they put forward was that the way Allah Ta'ālā had subjugated the wind for Sayyidnā Sulayman عليه السلام - as he himself had told them - and had thereby reduced great distances on the earth into brief spans, so, they demanded that he too should do the same for them so that their travels to Syria and Yaman become easy on them.

Their third demand was that the way Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ made the dead come alive, he too should do that for them. Since he was for them no less than him, let him bring their forefather, Quṣayy, back to life so that they could ask him whether or not this religion brought by the Arab prophet was true. (Maẓharī with reference to al-Baghawī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Marduwayh)

The hostile demands mentioned in the verses cited above were answered in the following words:

وَلَوْ اَنَّ قُرْاٰنًا سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ اَوْ قُطِّعَتْ بِهِ الْاَرْضُ اَوْ كُلِّمَ بِهِ الْمَوْتٰى ۭ بَلْ لِّلّٰهِ الْاَمْرُ جَمِيْعًا

> And even if there were a Qur'ān wherewith mountains could be moved, or the earth could be split apart, or wherewith the dead are spoken to (they would not believe). But all the judgements are of Allah - 31.

Lexically, the expression: سُيِّرَتْ بِهِ الْجِبَالُ refers to the moving of mountains from their place, and: قُطِّعَتْ بِهِ الْاَرْضُ signifies the traversing of long distances in a short time, and: كُلِّمَ بِهِ الْمَوْتٰى denotes talking to the dead after they have been brought back to life. As for the principal clause of the conditional clause beginning with the word لَوْ (if), it stands understood under the necessity of the textual situation, that is: لَمَا اٰمَنُوْا (they would not believe). The nature of this complement is the same as specifically mentioned at another place in the Holy Qur'ān while dealing with a similar subject. There it was said: (وَلَوْ اَنَّنَا نَزَّلْنَآ اِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْتٰى وَحَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قُبُلًا مَّا كَانُوْا لِيُؤْمِنُوْٓا - 6:111).

It means that, even if these demands were to be met through the Qur'ān, as a miracle, they were still not going to believe because they have already seen such miracles before their present demands, miracles which are far more impressive than what they want now. The splitting of the moon in two at the hands of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is far more miraculous than mountains moving away from their place, or the subjugation of the wind. Similarly, the talking of inert pebbles in his blessed hands and their recitation of praises for Allah is certainly far greater a miracle than the talking of a dead person brought back to life. During the Night of the Ascent (al-Mi'rāj), the journey to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā (Jerusalem), and then onwards from there, the journey through the heavens, and

then the return back to Makkah in a very short span of time is indeed far more striking than the miraculous subjugation of the wind and the throne of Sulaymān ﷺ. But these arrogant people, despite having seen all this with their own eyes, did not believe. And when they acted in that unreasonable manner, it is obvious that their demands tell on their intention which is no more than a device to gain time. They have to accept nothing and they have to do nothing. Since the objective behind these demands made by the disbelievers was to reach a stage when their demands will not be fulfilled whereupon they will have a good occasion to say that, *Ma'ādh Allah,* these are things Allah Ta'ālā Himself has no control over. Or, may be the request made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ has no effect and that it is either not heard by Allah or is not accepted by Him - which gives the impression that he is no Messenger of Allah. After that, it was said: بَلْ لِّلّٰهِ الْاَمْرُ جَمِيْعًا (But all the judgements are of Allah). It means that power, choice and control, all of it, belongs to Allah which strongly suggests that not fulfilling the demands made is not because they are beyond the power and control of Allah Ta'ālā. Instead, the truth of the matter is that He alone is the One who knows the considerations and expediencies which go into the working of this universe. It was in His ultimate wisdom that He did not consider it appropriate to fulfill these demands - because He knows the doggedness and ill-intention of the makers of the demands. He knows that, should all demands made by them were to be fulfilled, they would still not believe.

Now said in the third sentence of verse 31 was: اَفَلَمْ يَايْـَٔسِ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَنْ لَّوْ يَشَآءُ اللّٰهُ لَهَدَى النَّاسَ جَمِيْعًا (Are the believers not aware that if Allah wills, He would bring all the people to the right Path?).

Commenting on this statement, Imām al-Baghawī has reported that the noble Ṣaḥābah, when they heard these demands of the disbelievers, started nursing the thought that it would be better if these demands were fulfilled for, by doing so, all Makkans will become Muslims and Islam itself would move to a position of greater strength. Thereupon, the present verse was revealed. It means: Is it that believing Muslims, despite seeing and knowing the habit of excuse-seeking and hostile argumentations practiced by the disbelievers, have not yet lost hope in their potential to enter the fold of faith? If not, why would they start indulging in such wishes and hopes while they also know that, had Allah Ta'ālā so

willed, He would have Himself given to all human beings such guidance as would have left for them no choice but to become Muslims. But, His wisdom did not stipulate that everyone should be compelled to enter the fold of Islām and 'Īmān (faith). In fact, the very wisdom was to let everyone have his or her choice, and opt for Islām or Kufr (disbelief) on the basis of that personal choice.

Said in the fourth sentence of verse 31 was: وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا تُصِيبُهُمْ بِمَا صَنَعُوا قَارِعَةٌ أَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيبًا مِّنْ دَارِهِمْ (And the disbelievers shall keep receiving disaster for what they did, or it will visit somewhere close to their homes). According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, the word: قَارِعَةٌ (*Qāri'ah*) means disaster, hardship or calamity. The sense of the verse is that the demands of these disbelievers were not acceeded to as their ill-intention and doggedness were already known, that is, even if these demands were fulfilled, they would still not believe. In the sight of Allah, these people deserve nothing less than that disasters keep coming upon them in this mortal world as well, as it happened with the people of Makkah who were either hit by famine, or had the misfortune of being killed or caught during the Islamic battles of Badr and Uḥud, or had someone struck by lightening, or yet another became a victim of some calamity. Then, the statement: أَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيبًا مِّنْ دَارِهِمْ (or it will visit somewhere close to their homes) means that there will be times and occasions when the disaster will not hit them directly. Rather, it would come upon habitations close to them. The purpose would be to teach them a lesson and help them see their own evil end in the backdrop of a vicinity close by.

Verse 31 concludes with the statement: حَتّٰى يَأْتِيَ وَعْدُ اللّٰهِ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ (until Allah's promise comes to pass. Surely, Allah does not back out on His promise). It means that this cycle of disasters will continue until such time that the promise of Allah stands fulfilled, because the promise of Allah can never go unfulfilled. The promise referred to here is the promise of the conquest of Makkah. The sense is that different kinds of disasters will keep visiting these people until comes the time when Makkah al-Mukarramah will be finally conquered and all antagonists will stand subdued.

Before we part with the subject, let us go back to the statement: أَوْ تَحُلُّ قَرِيبًا مِّنْ دَارِهِمْ (or it will visit somewhere close to their homes - 31) which tells us that a disaster or calamity or punishment which visits the envi-

rons of a people has a concealed wise consideration of Allah Ta'ālā behind it. The message it delivers is that people living nearby should stand warned, learn from what happened to others and thereby correct their own doings. If taken seriously, what came as punishment for others could become a message of mercy for them. Otherwise, a day will come when they too will end up the way others did under their eyes.

Today, in our countries and in areas close to them, we keep hearing of different kinds of calamities hitting some community or locality almost every day. There are floods, cyclones, earthquakes or some other punishing disasters. According to this statement of the Qur'ān, these are not simply punishments meted out to such localities and communities, in fact they also serve as warnings to people living in surrounding areas. In old days, though awarenes through the arts and sciences was not so spick and span, but people did have the fear of Allah in their hearts. If some disaster of this nature struck a place, the people who lived there and even those who lived in adjoining areas would get alarmed and frightened. In that state, they would turn to Allah Ta'ālā, repent from their sins, seek forgiveness from Him and take the giving of charity (*ṣadaqah*) at a time like this a source of salvation. And they could see with their own eyes that their difficulties stood removed very easily by doing so. Here we are in our day, so heedless that, even at a time so terrible, we seem to remember everything except Allah. When we do that, we become very much like the general run of non-Muslims - our eyes get fixed on material means only. Turning for help to the Causer of all Causes (the *Musabbibul-Asbāb*), even at such a crucial time, is something very few people have the *Taufīq* of doing. It is the direct result of this failing that the world always keeps experiencing unwelcome happenings of this nature.

Given below are some additional comments on the last sentence of verse 31, explained a little earlier. There it was said: حَتّٰى يَاْتِىَ وَعْدُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيْعَادَ (until Allah's promise comes to pass. Surely, Allah does not back out on His promise).

As explained earlier, *'wa'dah'* or 'promise' at this place means the Conquest of Makkah, a promise Allah Ta'ālā had made to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The sense of the verse thus comes to be that Makkah will be conquered ultimately, and the disbelievers will be destroyed, subdued

and overpowered. Now before that comes to be, let them taste a little punishment as well for their crimes before that happens. And it is also possible that the expression: وَعْدُ اللّٰهِ (the promise of Allah) refers to the day of Judgement at this place, a promise which has been made to all prophets and has been made since ever. So, on that day particularly, every disbelieving criminal will receive the full punishment for his or her doings.

The hostile questions asked by the disbelievers and the obstinacy shown by them as described in the event mentioned above posed the problem that these may cause pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, therefore, in the next verse, it was said to comfort him: وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَاَمْلَيْتُ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ثُمَّ اَخَذْتُهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ (And Messengers have been mocked at before you, so I let the disbelievers go on for a while. Then I seized them. So, how was My punishment?) In other words, it means that conditions faced by the Holy Prophet ﷺ were not faced by him alone. There were prophets before him who had been facing similar conditions when their deniers were not seized immediately upon the committment of their crime and they continued to make fun of the prophets. When they reached the limit, they were seized by Divine punishment and what a seizure that was which left none of them active enough to go on with their confrontation.

In the verse: اَفَمَنْ هُوَ قَآئِمٌ عَلٰى كُلِّ نَفْسٍ (Is then He, who is watchful over everyone ... 33), the ignorance and irrationality of the disbelievers has been exposed by saying that these people are certainly short on sense when they equate inert idols with His pure Being, a Being that watches everyone and is the ultimate reckoner of everyone's deeds. Then, it was said that the real reason behind their unreasonable attitude is that Shayṭān has made their very ignorance look good in their sight and, therefore, this they take to be 'achievement' and 'success.'

Verses 34 - 37

لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَشَقُّ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنَ
اللّٰهِ مِنْ وَّاقٍ ﴿۳۴﴾ مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِىْ وُعِدَ الْمُتَّقُوْنَ ؕ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْاَنْهٰرُ ؕ اُكُلُهَا دَآئِمٌ وَّظِلُّهَا ؕ تِلْكَ عُقْبَى الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا ۖۗ وَّعُقْبَى

الْكٰفِرِيْنَ النَّارُ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَفْرَحُوْنَ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ
وَمِنَ الْاَحْزَابِ مَنْ يُّنْكِرُ بَعْضَهٗ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اُمِرْتُ اَنْ اَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ وَلَآ
اُشْرِكَ بِهٖ ؕ اِلَيْهِ اَدْعُوْا وَاِلَيْهِ مَاٰبِ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا ؕ
وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ بَعْدَ مَا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۙ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ
وَّلِيٍّ وَّلَا وَاقٍ ﴿٣٧﴾ ع

For them there is punishment in the worldly life and, indeed, the punishment of the Hereafter is even harder, and for them there is none to save them from Allah. [34]

Here is the description of the Paradise promised to the God-fearing: underneath it the rivers flow; its food is everlasting and (so is) its shade. This is the ultimate abode of the God-fearing while the ultimate abode of the disbeliever is Fire. [35]

And those We have given the Book are happy with what has been sent down to you. And among the groups there are those who deny some of it. Say, "I am commanded only to worship Allah and not to ascribe partners to Him. To Him I call and to Him is my return." [36]

And thus We have sent it down, being a command in Arabic. And if you follow their desires, after the knowledge that has come to you, there shall be no friend for you against Allah, nor a saviour. [37]

Verses 38 - 43

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَّذُرِّيَّةً ؕ وَمَا كَانَ
لِرَسُوْلٍ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ بِاٰيَةٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ لِكُلِّ اَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ يَمْحُوا
اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ وَيُثْبِتُ ۚۖ وَعِنْدَهٗۤ اُمُّ الْكِتٰبِ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَاِنْ مَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ
الَّذِيْ نَعِدُهُمْ اَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَاِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلٰغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤٠﴾
اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّا نَاْتِي الْاَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ اَطْرَافِهَا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ لَا
مُعَقِّبَ لِحُكْمِهٖ ؕ وَهُوَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤١﴾ وَقَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ

قَبْلِهِمْ فَلِلّٰهِ الْمَكْرُ جَمِيْعًا ؕ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ؕ وَسَيَعْلَمُ
الْكُفّٰرُ لِمَنْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَسْتَ مُرْسَلًا ؕ
قُلْ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًاۢ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۙ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ الْكِتٰبِ ﴿٤٣﴾ ع

And We have sent messengers before you, and gave them wives and children. And it is not for a messenger to bring a sign without the will of Allah. For every time there is something prescribed. [38] **Allah wipes off what He wills and affirms (what He wills). And with Him is the Mother Book.** [39]

And if We show you some of what We promise them, or We take you back to Us (you are not accountable), you are only to convey the message and We are to reckon. [40]

Have they not seen that We are coming to the land narrowing it down from all its sides? And Allah judges; there is none to repel His judgement. And He is swift at reckoning. [41]

And those before them did devise plans, but Allah's are the plans altogether. He knows what every soul earns. And the disbelievers will soon know for whom is the ultimate abode. [42]

And the disbelievers say, "You are not a messenger." Say, "Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and whoever with whom is the knowledge of the Book." [43]

Commentary

The common thinking of disbelievers and polytheists about a prophet and messenger was that he should be from a species other than human, such as a creation like angels so that their supremacy over the general run of human beings becomes clearly pronounced. The Holy Qur'ān has refuted this false idea of theirs in many verses by saying that they had simply failed to realize the reality and wisdom behind the sending of prophets and messengers, therefore, they went about pursuing such ideas. The reason is that a messenger is sent by Allah Ta'ālā as a model in order that communities of human beings follow them and learn deeds and morals similar to theirs. And it is obvious that whoever is human can only follow a fellow human being. For him to follow someone who

does not belong to his species is impossible. For example, take an angel. He has no hunger or thirst or desires, neither does he sleep or get tired. Now, if human beings were commanded to follow them as a model, they would have more trouble on their hands than they could handle in terms of their capability. The same objection of the polytheists showed up here, specially so, because of the marriages of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. An answer to this was given in initial sentences of the first verse (38) by asking them: How can you consider a person who marries once, or more than once, and has a family and children, as not being fit or being contrary to the station of prophethood or messengership? What proof do you have for such an assertion? In fact, it has always been the blessed practice of Allah Ta'ālā that He makes His prophets masters of a household. Prophets who have passed earlier - and you too believe in the prophethood of some of them - had wives, and children. The idea that this way of life is something contrary to being a prophet or messenger of Allah, or against the norms of piety or sainthood, is plain ignorance.

As it appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: I too keep fast and I too break it (that is, it is not that I always keep fasting). And he said: I too sleep during nights and rise up too for prayers (that is, it is not that I do nothing but keep praying all night); and I eat meat too, and I marry too. Whoever finds this practice of mine objectionable, he is not a Muslim: وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ بِاٰيَةٍ اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ (And it is not for a messenger to bring a sign without the will of Allah - 38).

Out of the hostile questions the disbelievers and polytheists have always been asking the blessed prophets - and were asked of the Holy Prophet ﷺ too by the polytheists of his time - two are fairly common. The first question envisaged that the injunctions revealed in the Book of Allah should be in accordance with their wishes. For instance, this request of theirs appears in Sūrah Yūnus [10:15]: اِئْتِ بِقُرْاٰنٍ غَيْرِ هٰذَآ اَوْ بَدِّلْهُ that is, 'bring to us a Qur'ān other than this (which does not prohibit the worship of our idols), or change it (that is, you yourself change the injunctions brought by it, replacing 'punishment' with 'mercy' and 'unlawful' with 'lawful').

Now take their second demand. Despite having seen open miracles of the blessed prophets, may peace be upon them, they still insisted that

ever new miracles be shown to them. 'If you show us this or that miracle, then', they would say, 'we may consider becoming Muslims.' The word: آية (*āyah*) used in this sentence of the Qur'ān (which lexically means 'signs') could be taken in both the two senses it has - because, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, the verses of the Qur'ān are also called Āyāt, and the same word means a miracle. Therefore, in their explanation of this 'verse', some commentators have, by taking this word in the sense of the verse of the Qur'ān, explained it by saying that no prophet has the authority or choice to introduce a verse on his own in his Book. And some others, by taking this word: آية: *'Āyah* in the sense of a miracle, have held that it means that Allah has not given any messenger or prophet the authority or choice to show a miracle, when he chooses or as he chooses it to be. It is said in Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī that, based on the rule of *'umūm al-majāz*, both meanings could be taken, and both explanations could be correct.

Given this analysis, the gist of the sense carried by the verse is that 'demanding Our prophet to change the verses of the Qur'ān is misplaced and wrong. We have not given such a right to any messenger.' Similar is the case with the demand that he shows to them a particular miracle as identified by them. This too is a proof of their being ignorant of the reality of prophethood, because it is not within the control of a prophet or messenger that he could go ahead on his own and show a miracle as they demand according to their whim.

In the last sentence of verse 38, it was said: لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ (For every time there is something prescribed). The word: أجل (*'ajal*) is used in the sense of a time-frame for everything, and: كِتَاب (*kitāb*) here carries the sense of a verbal noun, that is, written or prescribed. The statement means that the time and quantum of everything stands prescribed with Allah Ta'ālā. He has prescribed in eternity that such and such person shall be born at such and such time, and shall live for so many days, what places he shall go to, what shall be his life work, and when and where he shall die.

Similarly, it is also prescribed that during such and such time what revelations and injunctions will be sent to such and such prophet, because the very process of the coming of injunctions as approriate to every time and every people is required by reason and justice. And also pre-

scribed is that such and such miracle shall manifest itself at the hands of such and such prophet at such and such time.

Therefore, asking the Holy Prophet ﷺ to insert particular kinds of injunctions into the Qur'ān as proposed by them, or asking him to show a particular miracle on request is a hostile and wrongful demand, which is based on an absence of awareness of the reality of messengership and prophethood.

Said in the next verse (39) was: يَمْحُوا اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ وَيُثْبِتُ وَعِنْدَهٗٓ اُمُّ الْكِتٰبِ : 'Allah wipes off what He wills and affirms (what He wills). And with Him is the Mother Book.' [The translation of: اُمُّ الْكِتٰبِ (*umm-ul-kitāb*) as 'Mother Book' reflects a word for word replacement possible at this place which also exhudes its applied sense in some measure, though not as clearly as given in the Tafsīr immediately after] The literal meaning of 'Umm al-Kitāb' is 'The Original Book.' The reference here is to the 'Preserved Tablet' (al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ) in which there can be no change or alteration.

The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā, in His most perfect power and wisdom, obliterates what He wills, and affirms what He wills. And after this obliteration and affirmation, whatever there is stays preserved with Allah Ta'ālā. No one has access to it, nor can there be any deletion and addition into it.

Leading authorities in Tafsīr, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رحمه الله تعالى and Qatādah ؓ and others have declared that this verse too is related with the obliteration and affirmation of injunctions and religious codes, that is, with the problem of Naskh or abrogation. As for the sense of the verse, they say that in the Books which Allah Ta'ālā sends to different people through different messengers, and outlined in which are religious laws, obligations and duties, it is not necessary that all injunctions contained therein be eternal and last for ever. In fact, it is in fitness with conditions prevailing among peoples and the change in times that Allah, in His wisdom, abrogates or repeals whichever injunction He wills, and affirms and retains whichever He wills. Then, the original Book is preserved with Him after all. It is already written there that such and such injunction sent down for such and such people is for a particular period of time, or is based on particular conditions. When that term expires, or

those conditions change, this injunction will also change. In this original Book, that term and that appointed time stands recorded with full and authentic determination. Also entered there is the description of the injunction which will replace the one changed.

This eliminates the doubt that Divine injunctions should never be abrogated, because enforcing an injunction and then abrogating it indicates that the enforcer of the injunction did not have the correct perception of conditions, therefore, it was after having seen conditions that it had to be abrogated. And it is obvious that the majesty of Allah Ta'ālā is beyond the possibility that something be outside the realm of His knowledge. Since this stipulation tells us that the injunction which is abrogated exists in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā beforehand, that is, the injunction has been promulgated only for a specified period of time and will be changed later. This is similar to what a physician does in our world of experience. He examines a patient, looks at the symptoms of what he is ailing from, then prescribes a medicine relevant to the current condition he is in. And he knows the effect the medicine is going to bring forth, and after which, the particular medicine would have to be changed and the patient would have to be given another medicine of another description. To sum up, it can now be said that, according to this Tafsīr, the phenomena of obliteration and affirmation (*maḥw* and *ithbāt*) means the abrogation (*naskh*) of injunctions, and its affirmation and continuity.

As based on the view of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, a group of leading commentators, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Wakī' and others, have reported another Tafsīr of this verse where the subject of the verse has been determined as concerning the decree of destiny. And the meaning of the verse has been explained by saying that, according to the explicit statements of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, the destinies of the creations of Allah, including the sustenance received by every person during his entire years of life and the comfort and distress faced along the line, and their respective magnitudes are written since *'azal* even before the creation of His creatures. Then, at the time of the birth of a child, the angels too are asked to keep it committed to writing. And every year, in the Laylatul-Qadr (The Night of Power), a full roster of what is supposed to happen during the course of that year is handed over to the angels.

In short, the age of every created individual, his or her sustenance,

times of movement and periods of rest are all determined, and written. But, from this decree of destiny, Allah Ta'ālā wipes off or obliterates what He wills and affirms or retains what He wills. However, the statement: وَعِنْدَهٗٓ اُمُّ الْكِتٰبِ (And with Him is the Mother Book) means that the original Book, according to which, after the process of obliteration and affirmation, ultimate action shall be taken, is with Allah. In this, there can be no change or alteration.

This has been elaborated in many authentic Aḥādīth which tell us that there are some *a'māl* (deeds) which cause a person's age and sustenance to increase. Some make them decrease. It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that maintaining relations which must be maintained (*ṣilah ar-raḥim*) becomes the cause of increase in one's age. A narration in the Musnad of Aḥmad reports that there are occasions when one commits some such sin as leads to his being deprived of sustenance, and by serving and obeying one's parents, years of life increase, and nothing except *du'ā'* (prayer) can avert what is Divinely destined.

What we find out from all these narrations is that the age, the sustenance and things like that which Allah Ta'ālā has written into someone's destiny can become more or less because of some deeds - and also because of *du'ā'* (prayer), *taqdīr* (destiny) can be changed.

This is the subject dealt with in this verse. It says that the change or alteration in age or sustenance or hardship or ease in life as written in the Book of Destiny which takes place because of some deed (*'amal*) or prayer (*du'ā'*) means that Book of Destiny which is in the hands of the angels, or in their knowledge. There are times when, some decisions of this type of destiny are contingent on some particular condition. When that condition is not found, that decision does not take effect. Then, this condition is sometimes in writing and in the knowledge of angels, but there are times when this is not written - but exists in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā alone. When that decision changes, everyone is left wondering. A destiny of this nature is called 'conditional' or 'contingent' (*mu'allaq*) in which, as explicitly stated in this verse, the process of obliteration and assertion keeps operating. But, the last sentence of the verse: وَعِنْدَهٗٓ اُمُّ الْكِتٰبِ, that is, 'with Him is the original Book,' means that above this 'conditional destiny,' (*taqdīr mu'allaq*) there is the 'final and definite destiny' (*taqdīr mubram*) which is with Allah Ta'ālā written in the original Book.

And that is the exclusive domain of Divine knowledge. Written there are the decisions, injunctions and commands which issue forth as the final outcome after the conditions of deeds have been fulfilled or *du'ā'* has been answered. Therefore, that is totally free of obliteration and assertion and addition and deletion. (Ibn Kathīr)

In verse 40: وَإِنْ مَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ (And if We show you some of what We promise them, or We take you back to Us), it is to comfort and assure the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he has been given the good news that the promises Allah has made to him that Islām will have the final victory and disbelief and disbelievers will be disgraced shall come to pass definitely. But, he is told, 'you should not concern yourself as to when this victory will finally come.' May be, this happens within his life time, and it is also possible that it comes after his departure from this mortal world. 'For your peace of heart, even this much is enough that you are continuously witnessing that We are causing the lands of the disbelievers to keep being sliced off their sides,' that is, these sides pass on under Muslim control whereby the land occupied by them keeps reducing in area. This causes well-being for Muslims and a day will come when the final phase of their victory shall stand completed. The command is in the very hands of Allah Ta'ālā. There is no one who can avert this command. And He is the One swift at reckoning.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūratur-Ra'd
Ends here

Sūrah Ibrāhīm

(Abraham)

Sūrah Ibrāhīm is Makkī and it has 52 verses and 7 sections.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 3

الٓرٰ قف كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ۙ بِاِذْنِ
رَبِّهِمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَمِيْدِ ﴿١﴾ لا اللّٰهِ الَّذِىْ لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ ط وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيْدِ ﴿٢﴾ لا الَّذِيْنَ
يَسْتَحِبُّوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْاٰخِرَةِ وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ
وَيَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا ط اُولٰٓئِكَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ ۢ بَعِيْدٍ ﴿٣﴾

Alif, Lām, Rā. This is a book We have sent down to you, that you may take the people out of (all sorts of) darkness* into the light with the will of their Lord - to the path of the Mighty, the Praiseworthy, [1] **Allah, the One to whom belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. Woe is to the disbelievers from a severe punishment,** [2] **to those who prefer the worldly life to the Hereafter and prevent (people) from the way of Allah, and seek crookedness in it. Those are far away in straying.** [3]

---

*. Stands for "الظّلمات" which is the plural of ظلمة (darkness). With the English equivalent "darkness" having no plural, effort has been made to convey the sense by adding "all sorts of" in brackets, because by using the plural form in the case of 'darkness' and the singular form in the case of 'light' the Holy Qur'ān has given a subtle hint to the fact that erroneous beliefs and conducts (represented in the text by 'darkness') have various forms while the truth (represented in the text by 'light') is only one.

Commentary

The Sūrah and Its Subjects

Beginning here is Sūrah Ibrāhīm, the fourteenth Sūrah of the Holy Qur'ān. This Sūrah is Makkī. It was revealed before Hijrah with the exception of some verses about which difference exists whether they are Makkī or Madanī.

In the beginning of the Sūrah, there is a description of the attributes of the mission of messengers and prophets which is followed by the theme of Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah, and its proofs. It was in this connection that the story of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was introduced and it was in this context that the Sūrah was named: Sūrah Ibrāhīm.

The Sūrah opens with the words: الٓرٰ قف كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ (Alif, Lām, Rā. This is a book We have sent down to you, that you may take the people out of (all sorts of) darkness into the light with the will of their Lord). The initial letters - Alif, Lām, Rā - are from among the Isolated Letters (*al-Ḥurūf al-Muqaṭṭa'āt*) about which it has been said time and again that there is a standard policy and practice pursued by the most righteous elders in this matter. Their method is the safest and totally doubt-free. It tells us that we should firmly believe and have faith that whatever they mean or signify is true - but, stay away from launching deeper investigations into their meanings.

In the sentence which follows immediately: كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اِلَيْكَ (This is a book sent down to you), it is appropriate and clearly justified in terms of the syntactical construction that it should be taken as the predicate of the word: هٰذَا (*hādhā* : this) understood here, and the sentence should mean that 'this is a book which We have sent down to you.' By attributing the revelation of the book to Allah Ta'ālā here, and the address to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, a hint has been released which points out to two things. First, it says that this book is great as it was revealed by Allah Ta'ālā Himself, and then it is suggestive of the personal high station of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as he has been made its first addressee.

Said in the next sentence was: لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ بِاِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ (that you may take the people out of (all sorts of) darkness into the light with the will of their Lord). The word: النَّاسُ (*an-nās* : people) is used for human-

kind. It means all human beings who are present or will come in the future. The word: الظلمت (*az-zulumāt*), the plural of ظلمة (*zulmah*) which means darkness is well-known. Here, *'zulumat'* refers to the darkness of Kufr (infidelity, disbelief) and Shirk (the ascribing of partners to Allah) and the darkness of evil deeds - and the word: اَلنُّوْر (*an-nur*) means light, the light of faith. Therefore, the word: الظلمت (*az-zulumāt* : many a darkness) has been used here in its plural form, because there are many kinds and shades of Kufr and Shirk. And similarly, there are countless evil deeds too. But, the word: النُّوْر (*an-nūr*: the light of faith) has been introduced in the singular form, because faith and truth are one and the same. The sense of the verse is: We have sent this book to you so that, through it, you may deliver all peoples of the world from the multiple forms of darkness of Kufr and Shirk and evil deeds, and bring them out into the light of faith and truth, with the will of their Lord. Here, the particular use of the expression: رَبِّهِمْ (*Rabbihim* : their Lord) indicates that there is no other reason or intention behind this universal blessing of Allah Ta'ālā, but that He would let human beings of the world be delivered from every such darkness through His Book and Messenger. Indeed, it is the compassion and mercy which the Creator and Master of the entire humankind has, under the imperative of His being their Lord, always kept beaming on them. Otherwise, Allah Ta'ālā owes nothing to anyone, nor there is a right due against Him, nor is there anyone who can force Him to do anything.

Guidance is an Act of God

In this verse, taking people out from darkness into the light has been declared to be the act of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, although giving Hidāyah or guidance is, in reality, an act of Allah Ta'ālā alone - as it has been said in another verse of the Qur'ān: اِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِىْ مَنْ اَحْبَبْتَ وَلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَهْدِىْ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ , that is, 'you cannot, on your own, give guidance to anyone, but it is Allah alone who gives guidance to whom He wills - 28:56). Therefore, by adding: بِاِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ (with the will of their Lord), this doubt was eliminated because the sense the verse now carries is: This act of bringing people out from the darkness of Kufr and Shirk into the light of faith and good deeds is, though not in your hands originally, but it shall be with the will and permission of Allah Ta'ālā that you could do so.'

Rules of Guidance

This verse tells us that there is only one way all children of Ādam, the humankind on this earth, can be rescued from the evil layers of darkness into light, and the only alternative which can save humanity from the dual destruction in this world and in the Hereafter is no other but that of the Holy Qur'ān. The closer people come towards it, the luckier they would find themselves to be. They will find peace and security and relief and happiness in their present life as well as in the life to come with success at its best. And similarly, the farther they remain from it, the more exposed they shall be to living self-destruct lives both in this world, and in the Hereafter.

Not elaborated within the words of the verse is the manner in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ will deliver people from the many kinds of darkness and bring them into the light through the Qur'ān. But, this much is fairly evident that the usual method of correcting a people through a book is that the teachings of that book be spread out among those people and they be convinced to abide by it.

The Recitation of the Holy Qur'ān too is a Standing Objective in its own right

Apart from what has been stated above, there is yet another characteristic of the Holy Qur'ān, that is, its recitation and the reading of its words, even without understanding them, registers a positive effect on the human self. It helps its reciter to stay safe against evils. At least in the case of Kufr and Shirk, no matter how attractive their traps may be, a reciter of the Qur'ān, even though he may be reciting it without understanding it, can never fall into those traps. This has been witnessed in the current history during the Hindu movement of Shudhi Sanghtan. In this mass effort to convert Muslims, some of those who fell a victim to their trap were strangers even to the recitation of the Qur'ān. In our day, Christian missioneries maintain an inviting network fortified by many incentives and rewards in almost every region where Muslims live. But, their success, if any, is restricted only to households and families which are heedless even to the recitation of the Qur'ān - whether because of illiteracy and ignorance among them, or because of the perverted influence of what passes as new education (psuedo-westernized).

Perhaps, it is to point out to this spiritual influence that wherever

the Holy Qur'ān has described the basic functions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Recitation (Tilāwah) has been mentioned separately and ahead of the need to teach its meanings: يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ (3:164; 62:2). It means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been sent to accomplish three tasks. The first task is the recitation of the Holy Qur'ān, and it is obvious that Tilāwah or Recitation is related to words. As for meanings, they are understood, not recited. The second task is to cleanse people pure from evils. And the third task is to teach the Holy Qur'ān, and Wisdom, that is, teach the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah.

In short, the Holy Qur'ān is a Book of Guidance the basic purpose of which, no doubt, is to understand its meaning and act in accordance with it. It is also clear that its essential effect is to reform the whole human life, but alongwith it, the reciting of its words too, brings about a distinct effect in the correction and strengthening of the human self, though in an invisible manner.

As partly stated a little earlier, this verse attributes the act of bringing people out from all sorts of darkness into the light with the will of their Lord to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In order to further refine the explanation, it can now be said that by this attribution, it has also been established that the giving of guidance is though the act of Allah Ta'ālā in reality - but, it cannot be received or acquired without the medium of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The fact is that only that sense or interpretation of the Holy Qur'ān is trustworthy which has been communicated to us by the Holy Prophet ﷺ through his word or deed. Any interpretation contrary to it is not reliable.

What has been said in the last sentence of verse 1: اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَمِيْدِ (to the path of the Mighty, the Praiseworthy,) which goes on to verse 2: اللّٰهِ الَّذِىْ لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ (Allah, the One to whom belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth) refers back to the statement appearing in the beginning of verse 1. It is obvious that the mention of darkness and light in the above verse is not referring to the darkness and light which could be seen with naked eyes as a physical phenomenon. Therefore, it was to make it clear that it refers to the way of Allah. Whoever adopts this way would not stray away like the one who walks in darkness, nor do his or her steps falter, nor do they fail to achieve the objective set. So, the way of Allah means the way walking on

which human beings could reach their Creator and achieve the ultimate degree of success which is His pleasure.

It will be noticed that, at this place, the word: اللّٰه (Allah) has been preceded by two of His attributes: الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَمِيْدِ (Al-'Azīz and Al-Ḥamīd). Lexically, Al-'Azīz means Mighty, Overpowering - and Al-Ḥamīd denotes the Being who is deserving of praise. By bringing these two attributes before the basic name of Allah Ta'ālā the hint given is that the Pure and Sacred Being to whom this way is going to lead is Mighty, and Overpowering too, and deserving of all praise as well. Therefore, one who takes to this way will never falter or stumble anywhere enroute, nor the effort made on it will ever go waste. In fact, one is certain to reach the destination - only if one does not abandon this way.

After having mentioned these two attributes of Allah Ta'ālā earlier, it was said: اَللّٰهِ الَّذِىْ لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ (Allah, the One to whom belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth). In other words, Allah is that particular Being who is the Creator of everything in the heavens and the earth and He is the absolute Sovereign having no partners or associates.

Said in the concluding sentence of verse 2 was: وَوَيْلٌ لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيْدٍ (Woe is to the disbelievers from a severe punishment). The word: وَيْلٌ (*waiyl* : woe to) is used in the sense of severe punishment and fatal consequence. The verse means that those who dismiss and deny this blessing of the Qur'ān, and prefer to go on living in a multiplicity of darkness, should know that there is for them the darkest of destruction, and the severe punishment which is about to visit them.

The Meaning in Summation

The gist of the verse is that the Qur'ān has been revealed so that it rescues all human beings from darkness and brings them into the light of the way of Allah. But, certainly unfortunate are those who reject the Qur'ān itself - they, by doing so, are bringing punishment on themselves with their own hands. So, those who deny from the very outset that the Qur'ān is the Divine Word, are the targets of this warning of punishment obviously. But, those who, despite their belief in the Holy Qur'ān, have abandoned it in their practical life, in the sense that they never recite it, nor try to understand it, nor act upon its teachings, they too cannot be considered totally free and safe from becoming targets of this

warning.

After that, in verse 3, it was said:

الَّذِينَ يَسْتَحِبُّونَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْاٰخِرَةِ وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَيَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا ط
أُولٰئِكَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ بَعِيْدٍ

To those who prefer the worldly life to the Hereafter and prevent (people) from the way of Allah, and seek crookedness in it. Those are far away in straying.

This verse identifies the three states in which the deniers of the Qur'ān are found among disbelievers. These are their distinct traits of character. Firstly, they prefer their life in the present world to the life they are to have in the Hereafter. Therefore, they would tolerate any loss coming to them in the Hereafter for the sake of worldly gain or comfort. Given here is a hint towards the diagnosis of their disease - their chronic denial of the truth. Why is it that these people, despite that they have seen the all too manifest miracles of the Holy Qur'ān, still remain hostile and negative towards it? The reason is that their lust for life in the present world has blinded them. They are unable to visualize what would matter most in their life in the Hereafter. Therefore, they are quite content with the darkness they are in, and towards light they do not care to come.

As for their second trait, it has been said that they certainly like to stay within the many layers of darkness they have chosen for themselves after all. But, they inflict injustice upon injustice when, in order to conceal their error, they would prevent others too from taking to the broadway of light, that is, the way of Allah.

Identifying Some Errors in the Understanding of Qur'ān

Their third trait appears in: يَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا (seek crookedness in it). It can have two meanings. Firstly, they are always looking out for an opportunity, mean at heart and evil in deed as they are, to seek and find, if they can, some crookedness or fault in the otherwise radiant and straight path of Allah, whereby they might have an occasion to raise an objection or throw a taunt. This is the meaning given by Ibn Kathīr.

And this sentence could also mean that these people are always trying to find out something about the way of Allah, that is, about the Qur'ān and Sunnah, which could be in line with their ideas and wishes

so that they can present it in support of the truth of their position. This meaning has been given in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī. A fairly large number of educated people these days are involved in this sort of activity. They would come up with the framework of an idea, either as an outcome of their own error, or under the influence of some other nation. Then, they would go about looking for its supporting evidences from the Qur'ān and Sunnah. And if they happen to come across some word supposedly in support of that idea of theirs, they would take it to be a Qur'ānic proof in their favour - although, this method is wrong in principle because it is the duty of a true believer that he should first unburden his or her mind from personal ideas and wishes and then consult the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet. Whatever stands proved clearly therefrom should, for him or her, become the personal creed.

In the last sentence of verse 3: أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ (Those are far away in straying), described there is the sad end of the disbelievers whose three traits have been mentioned above. The substance of the statement is that these people have strayed out too far, so much so that now it is difficult for them to return to the right path.

Points of Guidance

According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, though, in this verse, these three traits have been clearly identified with disbelievers and that they are far away in straying has been mentioned as their sad end, but, in terms of the principle involved here, any Muslim who has these three traits present in him, he too shall be deserving of this warning. The gist of these three traits is given below:

1. To keep the love for worldly life on top of the concern for the Hereafter to the limit that one starts avoiding exposure to the light of faith.

2. To prevent people from the way of Allah so that they too will join hands with them.

3. To try to misread and misinterpret the Qur'ān and Sunnah in order to apply them to fit into personal ideas and wishes.

May Allah protect us from it.

Verse 4

وَمَآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا مِنۡ رَّسُوۡلٍ اِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوۡمِهٖ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمۡ ؕ فَيُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ مَنۡ
يَّشَآءُ وَيَهۡدِیۡ مَنۡ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَهُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ ﴿۴﴾

And We did not send any messenger but (speaking) in the tongue of his people, so that he might clearly speak to them. So, Allah lets go astray whom He wills and lets find guidance whom He wills. And He is the Mighty, the Wise. [4]

Commentary

Mentioned in the first sentence of this verse is the particular blessing and convenience granted by Allah Taʿālā that whenever He has sent a messenger to a people, He has sent him speaking their language, in order that he would convey Divine injunctions to them in their language and usage whereby understanding these becomes easy on them. If the language of the messenger had been different from that of his addressees, it is evident that his people would have to undergo the burden of having to translate the injunctions before they could understand them and, still, the understanding of injunctions correctly would have remained doubtful. Therefore, when a messenger was sent to the speakers of the Hebrew language, the language of the messenger was also Hebrew. The language of the messenger sent to the Persians was also Persian. The language of the messenger to the Berbers was appointed to be Berberī. It is possible that a person who was assigned to be a messenger would be an individual from among the same people to whom he was sent and his mother tongue would have been the language of those people, and it is also possible that the language into which he was born may have been other than that of the people he was sent to, but as Allah Taʿālā would have it, He had things arranged in a manner that the messenger learnt the language of the people he was to work with - as it was in the case of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام. Actually, he was a citizen of ʿIrāq where the language spoken was Persian. But, after his migration to Syria, he married among the people there and the language of the Syrians became his own language. Then, Allah Taʿālā made him the prophet of a region of Syria.

As for our noble Messenger ﷺ, his mission is, in terms of the area

of operation, for the whole world and, in terms of the time duration, it is universally applicable right upto the last day of Qiyāmah. No nation or group of people in this world, no matter which country they belong to and what language they speak, could be outside the circle of his mission as a messenger and prophet. And every new nation and every new language which comes into existence upto the day of Qiyāmah shall all be counted among the community to which the Da'wah (call) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ will reach. This is expressly mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān: يٰاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنِّىْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيْعًا (O people, I am the messenger of Allah [sent] to you all - 7:158). According to a narration of Sayyidnā Jābir رضي الله عنه appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ, while pointing out to his five distinctions among the universal community of prophets, has said: Before me, every messenger and prophet was sent to his people and community. Allah Ta'ālā sent me to all peoples who are the children of Ādam (on this earth).

Allah Ta'ālā willed that humankind on this earth should originate from Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام whom He made the first prophet of human beings. Then, in proportion to the increase in human population in terms of its social and economic status, arrangements to convey the right guidance to them through messengers and prophets kept being made by Allah Ta'ālā. Injunctions, laws and religious codes relevant to every period of time and to the needs of every people continued coming. Finally, when the development of the human scene reached the stage of maturity, Allah Ta'ālā sent the foremost among the line of prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā, *ṣallallāhu 'alaihi wa sallam*, as the Rasūl of the whole world, and the Kitāb and Sharī'ah He gave to him was given in its most complete and workable form which was valid for the whole world and for all times right upto the Last Day of Qiyāmah. It was said in the Qur'ān: اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَاَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِىْ (That is,'Today, I have perfected your religion and made My favour complete for you - 5:3).

The religious codes of past prophets, may peace be on all of them, were also perfect and complete in terms of their time and region. They too cannot be called imperfect or wanting. But, the perfection of the Sharī'ah brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not restricted to any specified time and region. It is absolutely perfect (that is, without restrictions or exceptions in any respect, or circumstances) and seen from this

angle, the perfection of religion is exclusive to this Sharī'ah, and this is the reason why the chain of prophethood was discontinued after the appearance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who is the Last among the blessed prophets, may peace be upon all of them.

Why Was the Qur'ān Revealed in the Arabic Language?

When messengers who spoke the language of past communities were sent among them, they did not have to work hard on translating the message brought by prophets. Now, a question arises here as to why the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent to Arabia alone with the Arabic language? And why was it that his Book too was revealed in the Arabic language specifically? But, a little deliberation would make the answer very clear. Everyone can understand when the mission and call of the Holy Prophet ﷺ became common for all peoples of the world speaking hundreds of different languages, then, there existed only two alternatives for the guidance of all of them. The first alternative was that the Qur'ān be revealed separately into the language of every group of people, and the teachings and instructions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ also be made available separately in the language of every community of people. In view of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā, managing something like that was not difficult at all. But, the great objective of sending one Rasūl, one Kitāb and one Sharī'ah for all peoples of the world, an objective which sought to forge a religious, moral and social unity and mutually shared orientation, despite the existence of thousands of differences among all these peoples, would have remained unrealized in the event that such an alternative was taken to.

Then, there was the other alternative of letting the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth for every people and every country be available in their separate languages. If this was ever done in that manner, it would have thrown the gates of interpolation in the Qur'ān wide open through which countless inroads in it could have been made. Thus, the miraculous quality of the Glorious Qur'ān, that its original words still remain perfectly protected, a quality which cannot be denied even by non-conformists and deniers of the Qur'ān, would have not survived intact. What would have happened that despite there being one religion and one book, its adherents would have been dispersed on so many different tracks that there would have remained no single rallying pivot of unity. We can have some

idea of this problem if we recall the amount of differences that arose in the interpretation and exegesis of the Holy Qur'ān despite that it was revealed in the single Arabic language - though, these differences did remain within permissible limits. As for differences engineered through false and impermissible means, they just have no limits. But, notwithstanding all this, there is a viable unity and a sense of distinct identity still present among all those people who observe and practice what the Qur'ān teaches, no matter in whatever degree it may be.

In short, the assumption that the Qur'ān could have come for every human group separately making the mission and teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ universal is something even a person of ordinary intelligence would not find correct. Therefore, it becomes necessary that the Qur'ān be sent in one single language and the language spoken by the prophet should also be the same language of the Qur'ān, and then its translations into other languages be made and circulated. After the Holy Prophet ﷺ, his deputies, the 'Ulamā of the community, should spread out the teachings and rules of guidance left behind by him among their peoples and in their language. Therefore, Allah Ta'ālā chose the Arabic language over all languages of the world for a number of reasons.

The Distinctions of Arabic

First of all, the Arabic language is the official language of the heavens. The language of angels is Arabic. The Preserved Tablet (al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ) is in the Arabic language as the Qur'ān tells us: بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَّجِيدٌ فِي لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ (Rather, it is a glorious Qur'ān in the Preserved Tablet - 85:21,22). Then, there is Jannah, the Paradise which is the real home of human beings and to where they have to return - and its language is also Arabic. In the Mu'jim of al-Ṭabarānī, Mustadrak of al-Ḥākim and in Shu'ab al-'Īmān of Al-Baihaqī, there is a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ which reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: أَحِبُّوا الْعَرَبَ لِثَلَاثٍ لِأَنِّي عَرَبِيٌّ وَالْقُرْآنُ عَرَبِيٌّ وَكَلَامُ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ عَرَبِيٌّ (That is, 'Love Arabs for three reasons: (1) That I am an Arab; (2) and the Qur'ān is in Arabic; (3) and the language of the people of Paradise is Arabic.' [In Mustadrak, Ḥākim calls this narration 'Ṣaḥīḥ.' The same rating appears in al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr. However, some Ḥadīth experts have called it weak and not authentic]. According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the subject of this Ḥadīth is proven and cannot be rated any lesser than 'Ḥasan' or good (Fayḍ al-Qadīr Sharḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr, p. 179, v. 1).

There is a narration reported in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that the language of Sayyidnā Ādam in Jannah was Arabic. When he was sent to the earth, and after his repentance was accepted, some changes in the Arabic language itself gave birth to the Syriac language.

This appears to support narrations which have been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and others. They say that the original language of all books Allah Ta'ālā has revealed was Arabic. It was archangel, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn who relayed it to the prophets by translating it to them while they conveyed it to their communities in their language. These narrations have been reported by 'Allamah Al-Suyuṭī in Al-Itqān and by most commentators of the Qur'ān under their comments on this verse. The gist of these reports is that the original language of all Scriptures is Arabic. But, with the exception of the Holy Qur'ān, other books have been given as translated into the language of a country or people. Therefore, their meanings are all from Allah Ta'ālā, but there is a change in words. It happens to be the unique feature of the Qur'ān alone that, like its meanings, the words too are but from Allah Ta'ālā. And perhaps, this is the reason why the Qur'ān extended a challenge that even the combined force of the Jinns and humankind of the whole world could not produce the likeness of a small Sūrah, rather of one Āyah of the Qur'ān - because, in terms of its high status in word and meaning, it is the Word of Allah and a Divine attribute which cannot be imitated by anyone. Given their spiritual status, other Scriptures too are the Word of Allah, but none of the other Scriptures made such a claim, perhaps because they were not in their original form in Arabic but were its translation. Otherwise, in terms of being the Divine Word like the Qur'ān, the uniqueness and inimitability of every such book was certain.

One major reason for the choice of the Arabic language is the inherent treasure of capabilities of the language itself for it has countless forms and methods through which a sense could be expressed.

And there is another reason too that Allah Ta'ālā has naturally gifted Muslims with a certain affinity and congruity with the Arabic language because of which everyone goes on to learn the language easily as needed. This is the reason why, in every country the Ṣaḥābah reached, it took very little time when, without any compulsion, the Arabic language

came to be the language of the whole country. Take Egypt, Syria and Iraq. Arabic was not their language. Today, they are known as Arab countries.

There is yet another reason for this phenomena. The Arabs were, though involved in serious evil practices, yet their capabilities, qualities and feelings can be called unmatched even under such circumstances. That is why Allah Ta'ālā raised His greatest and the last messenger from among them, and chose his language to be the language of the Qur'ān, and gave instructions to His prophet that they are the ones who should be the first to be guided and educated: وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيْرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِيْنَ (and warn your close relatives - 26:214) - and the very first step taken was that He assembled around His messenger the kind of individuals from among these very people, individuals who sacrificed their life, wealth and children, almost everything for the sake of the Holy Prophet ﷺ taking his teachings to be dearer than what they had, even their lives. And it was the result of this pattern of behaviour that their personalities became so deeply coloured by his company and teaching that an ideal society rose in the world the like of which was never witnessed by humanity on this earth and under these skies. The Holy Prophet ﷺ charged this unique group with the mission of spreading the teachings of the Qur'ān and said: بَلِّغُوْا عَنِّىْ وَلَوْ اٰيَةً that is, 'Convey everything you hear from me to my people, even though it is a short verse.' His Ṣaḥābah, alert and sacrificing as ever, took this order of their master so seriously that they fanned out far and wide around the world and made people become familiar with the Qur'ān and its teachings. Not even twenty five years had passed after the departure of the Holy Prophet ﷺ from this mortal world that the message of the Qur'ān started reverberating throught the East and West.

On the other hand it was a wisdom of Allah's creation and a wise arrangement of His destination that He inculcated in the entire *Ummah* of *da'wah* (i.e. all those addressed by the call of the Holy Prophet ﷺ including the *mushriks* and the Jews and the Christians), a special aptitude and zeal towards learning, teaching, writing and publishing books and promoting their respective ideas, a parallel of which is not found in the past history of the world. It was for this reason that the non-Arab nations not only acquired the disciplines of the Holy Qur'ān and Sunnah

with a great enthusiasm, but the advances made by non-Arabs in the acquirement of the Arabic language and its promotion and wider dissemination did not lag behind the Arabs.

It is certainly an astonishing fact that, in our time, the number of books on Arabic language, usage and grammar present in the world happen to have been written by non-Arabs. And their contribution to the services rendered for the collection and documentation of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and in its exegesis and explication, has not been any lesser than Arabs.

So, it was in this manner that the language of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Book he was given, despite being Arabic, overtook the whole world. At least, for all practical purposes of Da'wah (Call) and Tabligh (Spreading of the Message), the difference of Arab and non-Arab was eliminated. In every country and community, and among peoples speaking non-Arab languages, rose such 'Ulamā' who communicated to their own people the teachings of Qur'ān and Sunnah through their indigenous languages, easily and effectively. Thus, the wisdom of sending a messenger speaking the language of the addressed people stood realized and proved.

Toward the end of the verse it was said that it is for the convenience of people that Allah Ta'ālā has sent His messengers speaking their language, so that they can explain His injunctions to them clearly and satisfactorily. But, it is still beyond human control to bring someone onto the right path. The truth is that it lies in the power of Allah Ta'ālā alone. Whom He wills He lets go astray and whom He wills He would give guidance. He is Mighty, and Wise.

Verses 5 - 8

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اَنْ اَخْرِجْ قَوْمَكَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ۙ
وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِاَيّٰىمِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ ﴿٥﴾ وَاِذْ
قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهِ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ اَنْجٰىكُمْ مِّنْ اٰلِ
فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُوْمُوْنَكُمْ سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ وَيُذَبِّحُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُوْنَ

نِسَآءَكُمْ ۚ وَفِي ذَٰلِكُم بَلَآءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٦﴾ وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ
لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ ۖ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾ وَقَالَ
مُوسَىٰ إِن تَكْفُرُوا أَنتُمْ وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ۙ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ
حَمِيدٌ ﴿٨﴾

And surely, We sent Mūsā with Our signs saying, "Bring your people out of (all sorts of) darkness* into the light and remind them of the days of Allah. Surely, there are signs therein for every man of patience and gratitude.** [5]

And when Mūsā said to his people, "Remember Allah's blessing upon you when He delivered you from Pharaoh's people who have been inflicting on you a grievous torment, slaughtering your sons and leaving your women alive. And in that there was a great trial from your Lord." [6]

And when your Lord declared, "If you express gratitude, I shall certainly give you more, and if you are ungrateful, then My punishment is severe." [7]

And Mūsā said, "If you are ungrateful, you and all those on earth, then, Allah is free of all needs, worthy of every praise. " [8]

Commentary

The first verse cited above (5) mentions that Allah Ta'ālā sent Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with His 'Āyāt' (verses or signs) to bring his people out from the darkness of disbelief and disobedience into the light of faith and obedience.

The word: آيات (Āyāt) could mean the verses of the Torah for its very purpose was to spread the light of truth. 'Āyāt' is at times used in the sense of miracles. At this place, this meaning could also apply for Allah Ta'ālā had particularly blessed Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with nine miracles out of which the miracle of his staff turning into a snake and his hand becoming radiant have been mentioned at several places in the Qur'ān. If 'Āyāt' is taken in the sense of miracles, it would mean that Sayyidnā

*. Please see footnote on the first verse of this Sūrah.

**. The 'Days of Allah' here refers to the events of the past when Allah had graced some people with His favours and subjected some others to His punishment.

Mūsā عليه السلام was sent with such open miracles that no sane human being, once he had seen them, could ever go on sticking to his earlier denial and disobedience.

A Subtle Point

It will be noted that the word used in this verse is: قَوْم (*qawm*) while asking Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to bring his people from darkness into the light. But, when this very subject was taken up in the first verse of this particular Sūrah by addressing the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the word: قَوْم (*qawm*) was not used there. Instead, used there was the word: اَلنَّاس (*an-nās*) : لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ (that you may take the people [that is, the human beings] out of [all sorts of] darkness into the light). Implied here is the sense that the Divinely ordained mission of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as a prophet was only for his people, the Banī Isrā'īl, and for others in Egypt while the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was destined for the human beings of the entire world.

Then, it was said: وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِاَيّٰمِ اللّٰهِ (and remind them of the days of Allah).

'The Days of Allah'

The word: اَيَّام (*ayyām*) is the plural of *yowm* (day) which is well-known. The expression: اَيَّامُ اللّٰه (*Ayyāmullāh*) is used in two senses and both can be applied here. (1) Firstly, it could denote the particular days in which some war or revolution has occured, for example, the battles of Badr, Uḥud, Aḥzāb, Ḥunain and other events of this nature, or they may refer to major events when punishment overtook past communities which pulverized or destroyed nations and peoples known to be great and powerful. If so, the objective behind reminding these people of the 'Days of Allah' would be to warn them against the evil end of their disbelief.

(2) "And remind them of 'the Days of Allah'" carries another meaning also, that is, the blessings and favours of Allah Ta'ālā. In this case, reminding them of these Days would be a form of constructive admonition which, when directed at someone basically good by reminding him of the favour done by his benefactor, would result in his being ashamed of his hostility and disobedience.

The general pattern of the Qur'ānic method of reform is to tie a command given with relevant ways to act upon it which appear synchronized with it. Here, in the first sentence, Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ has been commanded to either recite the verses of Allah or show miracles to his people and bring them out from the darkness of disbelief into the light of faith. How would this be done? The sentences that follow give the method: There are two ways of bringing the disobedient ones to the right path: (1) Putting the fear of punishment in their hearts; (2) to remind them of Divine blessings and favours and to persuade them to take to being obedient to Allah. The sentence: ذَكِّرْهُمْ بِأَيَّامِ اللّٰهِ (and remind them of the Days of Allah) could mean both. If so, the sense would be that he should tell them about the evil fate of those who disobeyed from among the past communities, how punishment came upon them and how they were either killed in the Jihād or were disgraced. May be, by being so reminded, they take a lesson and save themselves from it. Similar to this there are so many usual blessings of Allah Ta'ālā which keep coming to them day and night, and also the special ones which were turned towards them in the hour of their need, for example, the shade of clouds over their heads in the wilderness of Tīh (the desert of Sinai), the coming of Mann and Salvā as food, the gushing forth of streams from stones when they needed water. So, they could be reminded of these and many other blessings of this nature and invited to believe in the Oneness of Allah and follow the path of obedience to Allah Ta'ālā.

Said in the last sentence of the first verse (5) was: اِنَّ فِیْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ (Surely, there are signs therein for every man of patience and gratitude). Here, '*āyāt*' means signs and proofs. The word: صَبَّار (*ṣabbār*) is a form of exaggeration derived from: صَبْر (*ṣabr*) which means very patient and much enduring, while the word: شَكُوْر (*shakūr*) is a form of exaggeration derived from: شُكر (*shukr*) which means very grateful. The sentence means that the Days of Allah - that is, past events whether related to the punishment of the deniers of truth, or to the blessings and favours of Allah Ta'ālā - are full of the signs and proofs of the perfect power and eloquent wisdom of Allah Ta'ālā, particularly for a person who is much observing of patience and gratitude.

The sense is that these open signs and proofs, though they are for the guidance of every observer, but certainly unfortunate are the disbe-

lievers who just do not care to ponder over them and, as a result, remain deprived of the benefit they would have derived from them. People who really benefit from these signs and proofs are those who have combined in their person the best of patience and gratitude. The reference here is to true believers - as it appears in a narration of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ carried by al-Baihaqī where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: 'Īmān is composed of two parts, half of it is patience and the other half, gratitude.' (Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ said: Ṣabr is the half of 'Īmān. Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb ﷺ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: Every state of affairs for a true believer is nothing but good. This is a quality of life no one else has been blessed with. This is because a true believer, if he finds comfort, blessing, honour or recognition, shows his gratitude before Allah Ta'ālā for these which then becomes a source of good for him both physically and spiritually (in the material world, the blessings Divinely promised increase, and abide, while in the world to come, the Hereafter, one receives the greatest of rewards for his or her gratitude). And, if a true believer is hit by pain or hardship, he observes patience against it. Because of his patience, that hardship turns into ease and comfort for him. In the present world, this happens when the observers of patience are blessed with the company of Allah Ta'ālā as said in the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ الصّٰبِرِيْنَ ('Surely, Allah is with those who observe patience'- 8:46). And anyone who has Allah with him ultimately finds his hardship changed into comfort. As for the Hereafter, we know that there the supreme reward for having observed patience is limitless with Allah Ta'ālā, as said in the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصّٰبِرُوْنَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (but then, paid in full to those who observe patience shall be their reward without reckoning - 39:10).

To sum up, no state in which a true believer is can be called bad. It is good all along. A fall would make him rise again and when hit by hardships he would emerge stronger and more polished.

So, 'Īmān is a priceless asset which transforms even shocks of hardship into drafts of comfort. Sayyidnā Abū Al-Dardā' ﷺ said that he had heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ say: 'Allah Ta'ālā told Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ: I am going to create a community after you who are such that if they have

what they desire and things turn out the way they want them to, then, they would be grateful, and if they have to face an unpleasant situation, against their wish and pleasure, then, they would accept it as a source of reward from Allah, and would observe patience. And this wisdom and forbearance demonstrated by them would not be the outcome of their own personal wisdom and forbearance, rather, We shall be bestowing upon them a certain part of Our Own Wisdom and Forbearance. (Maẓharī)

The substance of the reality of gratitude (*shukr*) is that one should not spend out the blessings given by Allah Ta'ālā in what is *Ḥarām*, in things which are not permitted, and in being disobedient to Him. One should also show gratitude by saying so as well, and by modeling and channelizing one's deeds in a manner that they would go on to become according to His good pleasure.

And the substance of the reality of patience (*ṣabr*) is that we should not worry about what comes to be against our wishes, taste or temperament, and that we avoid being ungrateful in what we say or do; and that we keep hoping for the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā in this mortal life too, and be certain of the great reward of patience due in the Hereafter as well.

The second verse (6) carries details of what was said earlier, that is, when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was commanded to remind his people, the Banī Isrā'īl, of the particular Divine blessing which changed their lives. Before the coming of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, they were living as slaves of the Pharaoh. Even as slaves, they were not treated humanly. Boys born among them were killed at birth. Only girls were left to survive and serve. After the appearance of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, such was his *barakah* that Allah Ta'ālā had them delivered from the punishing clutches of the Pharaoh.

The Outcome of Gratitude and Ingratitude

In the third verse (7), it was said: وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ (And when your Lord declared, "If you express gratitude, I shall certainly give you more, and if you are ungrateful, then My punishment is severe."). The word: تَأَذَّنَ (*ta'adhdhana*) is used in the sense of making known or announcing. The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā has announced it for all to hear: 'If you are thankful for My blessings and do not waste them in acts of disobedience to Me and in deeds which

have been prohibited, and try your best to mould your deeds to suit My pleasure, then, I shall increase these blessings for you.' This increase could be in the amount and volume of blessings, or it could be in their continuity and permanence as well. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'A person who is blessed with the Taufiq to be grateful shall never be deprived of *barakah* and increase in blessings.' (Reported by Ibn Marduwayh from Ibn 'Abbās - Maẓharī)

And then it was said: If you are ungrateful for My blessings then severe is My punishment too. The sum total of ungratefulness is that one spends out the blessings given by Allah Taʻālā in acts disobedient to Him and in things and ways which are impermissible; or, that one is tardy in fulfilling what has been made obligatory on him or her. As for the severe punishment against ungratefuness for blessings in the present world, it is possible that these blessings may be taken back all of a sudden; or, one may fall into some unwelcome circumstances as a result of which he remains unable to make use of that blessing, and finds punishment waiting for him in the Hereafter as well.

It is worth remembering at this point that in this verse, Allah Taʻālā does promise good return, reward and increase in blessing, and that too in an emphatic manner: لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ (I shall certainly give you more). But, in contrast to this, for the ungrateful it was not said: لَأُعَذِّبَنَّكُمْ (I shall certainly punish you). Instead of that, given here is a limited warning which conveys the sense that 'My punishment too, to whomsoever it reaches, is very severe.' In this particular interpretation, there is a hint that it is not necessary that every ungrateful person has to undergo punishment - the likelihood of forgiveness also exists.

In the last verse here (8), it was said: قَالَ مُوسَىٰٓ إِن تَكْفُرُوٓا۟ أَنتُمْ وَمَن فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا (And Mūsā said, "If you are ungrateful, you and all those on earth, then, Allah is free of all needs, worthy of every praise.)" This was said by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to his people. He is telling them that should they or, for that matter, all inhabitants of the earth become ungrateful to Allah Taʻālā, it is not going to cause any loss to Allah Taʻālā. As for Him, He needs no praise or gratitude for Himself. He is Independent. He is beyond that. He is intrinsically Praised and deserving of praise. If you do not praise Him, the angels do, all of them, and so does every particle of this universe.

So, whatever good there is in gratitude, that is for you alone. Therefore, when you are asked to be grateful by Allah Ta'ālā, there is no gain for Him in doing so. In fact, it is His infinite mercy reaching out to you in your interest.

Verses 9 - 15

أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبَؤُا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَّعَادٍ وَّثَمُودَ ۛ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ
بَعْدِهِمْ ۛ لَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۚ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَرَدُّوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ
فِي أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَقَالُوا إِنَّا كَفَرْنَا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا
تَدْعُونَنَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ ﴿٩﴾ قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرَكُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ
مُّسَمًّى ۚ قَالُوا إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا ۚ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَصُدُّونَا عَمَّا كَانَ
يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا فَأْتُونَا بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٠﴾ قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِنْ نَّحْنُ إِلَّا
بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ وَلٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَمُنُّ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَّشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا
أَنْ نَّأْتِيَكُمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ
﴿١١﴾ وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نَتَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدٰنَا سُبُلَنَا ۚ وَلَنَصْبِرَنَّ عَلَىٰ
مَا آذَيْتُمُونَا ۚ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا لِرُسُلِهِمْ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُمْ مِّنْ أَرْضِنَا أَوْ لَتَعُودُنَّ فِي مِلَّتِنَا ۚ فَأَوْحَىٰ
إِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ لَنُهْلِكَنَّ الظّٰلِمِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَلَنُسْكِنَنَّكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ
ۚ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِي وَخَافَ وَعِيدِ ﴿١٤﴾ وَاسْتَفْتَحُوا وَخَابَ
كُلُّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ ﴿١٥﴾

Has there not come to you the news of those before you, the people of Nūḥ, 'Ād and Thamūd and of those after them. No one knows them except Allah. Their prophets came to them with clear signs, but they turned their hands into their mouths and said, "We reject what you

are sent with, and we are certainly in confounding doubt about what you are calling us to." [9]

Their prophets said, "Is there any doubt about Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth? He calls you, so that He may forgive you some of your sins and give you time upto a specified term." They said, "You are nothing but a human being like us. You want to prevent us from what our forefathers used to worship. So, bring us some clear authority." [10]

Their prophets said to them, "We are no more than a human being like you, but Allah favours whom He wills from His servants. It is not for us to bring you an authority without Allah's permission. And in Allah the believers must place their trust. [11] **And what is wrong with us that we should not put our trust in Allah when He has guided us to our paths? And certainly we shall endure with patience whatever you afflict us with. And in Allah should trust those who trust."** [12]

And the disbelievers said to their prophets, "We shall certainly expel you from our land unless you come back to our faith." So, their Lord revealed to them, "We shall surely destroy the transgressors, [13] **and shall certainly have you dwell in the land after them. This is for the one who is fearful of standing before Me and is fearful of My warning."** [14] **And they sought help and every obstinate tyrant failed.** [15]

Verses 16 - 17

مِّنْ وَّرَآئِهٖ جَهَنَّمُ وَيُسْقٰى مِنْ مَّآءٍ صَدِيْدٍ ﴿١٦﴾ يَّتَجَرَّعُهٗ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُسِيْغُهٗ وَيَاْتِيْهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَّمَا هُوَ بِمَيِّتٍ ؕ وَمِنْ وَّرَآئِهٖ عَذَابٌ غَلِيْظٌ ﴿١٧﴾

The Hell is before him, and he shall be made to drink pus-fluid, [16] **which he will arduously sip, and hardly swallow. Death will come upon him from every place, yet he shall not die, and before him, there is a heavy punishment.** [17]

Verses 18 - 22

مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادِ ۨاشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيْحُ فِيْ يَوْمٍ
عَاصِفٍ ؕ لَا يَقْدِرُوْنَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوْا عَلٰى شَيْءٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلٰلُ
الْبَعِيْدُ ﴿١٨﴾ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ اِنْ يَّشَاْ
يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَاْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيْدٍ ﴿١٩﴾ وَّمَا ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ بِعَزِيْزٍ ﴿٢٠﴾
وَبَرَزُوْا لِلّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا فَقَالَ الضُّعَفٰٓؤُا لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْٓا اِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا
فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّغْنُوْنَ عَنَّا مِنْ عَذَابِ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ قَالُوْا لَوْ هَدٰىنَا اللّٰهُ
لَهَدَيْنٰكُمْ ؕ سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْنَآ اَجَزِعْنَآ اَمْ صَبَرْنَا مَا لَنَا مِنْ مَّحِيْصٍ ﴿٢١﴾ ع
وَقَالَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْاَمْرُ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعْدَ الْحَقِّ وَ
وَعَدْتُّكُمْ فَاَخْلَفْتُكُمْ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ لِيَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ سُلْطٰنٍ اِلَّآ اَنْ
دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِيْ ۚ فَلَا تَلُوْمُوْنِيْ وَلُوْمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ مَآ اَنَا
بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ بِمُصْرِخِيَّ ؕ اِنِّيْ كَفَرْتُ بِمَآ اَشْرَكْتُمُوْنِ مِنْ
قَبْلُ ؕ اِنَّ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

The deeds of those who disbelieve their Lord are like ashes blown away by the wind on a stormy day. They will not be able to gain anything out of what they did. That is the wandering away from the path. [18]

Have you not seen that Allah has created the heavens and the earth in a proper way? If He wills, He can put you away and bring a new creation; [19] **and that is not difficult for Allah.** [20]

And all of them shall appear before Allah. Then, the weak shall say to the arrogant, "We were your followers. So, can you relieve us a little from Allah's punishment?" They will say, "Had Allah guided us, we would have guided you. It is all the same for us whether we deplore or endure, we have no way out." [21]

And the Satan will say when the matter will have been decided, "Allah promised you a truthful promise while I

gave you a promise and did not fulfill it. And I had no authority over you, except that I invited you and you accepted my call. Hence, do not blame me, but blame yourselves. Neither I can come to your help, nor can you come to my help. I disown your associating me with Allah in the past. Surely, there is a painful punishment for the unjust." [22]

Verse 23

وَأُدْخِلَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ ۖ تَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

And those who believed and did good deeds shall be admitted to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, living there for ever by the will of Allah. There they shall greet each other with "Salām." [23]

Verses 24 - 25

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ
وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿٢٤﴾ تُؤْتِي أُكُلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا ۗ
وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

Have you not seen how Allah has set forth a parable: 'A good word is like a good tree, having its root firm and its branches in the sky. [24] **It brings its fruits at all times with the will of its Lord.' And Allah sets forth the parables for the people, so that they may take lesson.** [25]

Verses 26 - 29

وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا
مِنْ قَرَارٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الظَّالِمِينَ ۚ وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ ﴿٢٧﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ
إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا وَأَحَلُّوا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ ﴿٢٨﴾

جَهَنَّمَ ۚ يَصْلَوْنَهَا ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ ﴿٢٩﴾

And the parable of a bad word is like a bad tree, removed from the top soil, having no firm root. [26] **Allah keeps the believers firm with the stable word in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. And Allah lets the unjust go astray. And Allah does what He wills.** [27]

Have you not seen those who changed the favour of Allah with disbelief and landed their people in the house of destruction, [28] **the Jahannam. They shall enter it. And it is an evil abode.** [29]

Commentary

In verse 18, Allah Ta'ālā has likened the deeds of disbelievers to ashes which, if blown away by the wind, would scatter all over leaving no traces behind and making it impossible for somone interested to retrieve them and put them back to some use. So, the verse: مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ اَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادِ ۣ اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيْحُ فِيْ يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ (The deeds of those who disbelieve their Lord are like ashes blown away by the wind on a stormy day - 18) means that the deeds of disbelievers - though, they may obviously be good too - still, they too do not find acceptance with Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, they are all wasted.

After that, in the verses cited immediately above, the similitude of a believer and his deeds has been given first (24) which is followed by a similitude of disbelievers and hypocrites (26). In the earlier verse, a believer and his deeds have been likened to a tree with strong trunks, and roots going deep down the ground watered by underground streams. Deep-set roots give strength and stability to this tree so that strong winds would not throw them off the ground. And being high above the ground level, its fruit too remains protected against polluting agents. Then, another attribute of this tree is that its branches should be fairly elevated skywards. And the third attribute of this tree is that its fruit could be eaten during all seasons and under all conditions.

What tree is that and where is it found? About that, the sayings of the commentators differ. In all likelihood, that is a date-palm. This view is supported by experience, observation, and by Ḥadīth narrations as well. That the trunk of the date-palm is high and strong can be noticed physically. That its roots go deep down the ground is also well-known,

and its fruit too is eaten at all times and in different ways and conditions. From the time its fruit shows up on the tree upto the time it becomes ripe, it is eaten in all possible forms and situations as is or as transformed into chutneys and jams and in a myriad other preparations. After the fruit becomes ripe, it can be stored throughout the year. It somehow comes handy morning and evening, day and night, summer and winter, almost every season, every time. Even the pith of the tree is eaten while sweet juice is extracted from it. Mats and other articles of use are made from its leaves. Date stones make fine fodder for animals. In contrast, other trees yield their fruit during particular seasons and they become available within those seasons. They are not stored naturally, nor everything in them is put to some or the other use.

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ, Tirmidhī, Al-Nasā'ī, Ibn Ḥibbān and Ḥākim have reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: The 'good tree' (شَجَرَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ - mentioned in the Qur'ān) is the date-tree; and the 'bad tree' (شَجَرَةٌ خَبِيثَةٌ - also mentioned in the Qur'ān) is the tree of Ḥanẓal [colocynth, citrullus colocynthis] (Maẓharī)

According to a report from Mujāhid appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ said: Once we were present in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ when someone brought the pith of a date-palm for him. At that time, he asked his Companions: 'Out of the many trees, there is the tree which is like a believer (at this point, in a narration of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, it has been mentioned that the Holy Prophet ﷺ also said: The leaves of this tree do not fall in any season). Tell me which tree is that?' Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar says that he felt like telling him that it was the date tree. But, present there in the sitting were many senior Companions like Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین. I observed their silence and did not have the courage to say that. After that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself said: 'That is the date tree.'

One of the reasons why a believer has been likened to this tree is that the faith in Kalimah Ṭayyibah is his root, which is deep-set and strong. The accidents of the world cannot shake it out. There is no dearth of examples among the most perfect of all believers, the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'īn, rather among the staunch believers of every period of time, that they cared more about their 'Īmān and less for their life or

wealth or anything else. The second reason is their concern for purity and taste for decency in that they are not affected by the pollutants of the world - just like a large tree which remains unaffected by the impurities of the land surface. As for these two attributes, they bear similarity to: أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ (with its roots firm - 24) while the third reason is that the way the branches of the date-palm are high and skyward so are the fruits of the 'Īmān of a believer, that is, their deeds which are also raised toward the heavens. It appears in the Qur'ān: إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ that is, 'good words are raised towards Allah Ta'ālā.' The sense is that what a believer does in the form of Dhikr (remembrance) of Allah, Tasbīḥ (proclaiming His purity), Tahlīl (saying *lā ilāha illallāh*) and the recitation of the Qur'ān keeps reaching Allah Ta'ālā morning and evening.

The fourth reason is that the way the date fruit is eaten day and night at all times, in all seasons and under all conditions, it is in the same way that the good deeds of a believer continue day and night at all times, in all seasons and under all conditions. And the way everything about the date-palm is useful and beneficial, in the same way, every word and deed, movement and rest, and the effects generated by them, prove beneficial for the whole world - on condition that he or she be a perfect believer, and be a faithful practitioner of the teachings of Allah and His Rasūl ﷺ.

The Similitude of Disbelievers (Kuffār)

In contrast, the second image given is that of disbelievers. They have been likened to a 'bad tree' (شَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ). It is similar to the example of the 'good tree' which refers to the statement of Muslim creed: لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللهُ (*lā ilāha illallāh* : There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah), that is, 'Īmān or faith. And, in this manner, the equation of the 'bad word' with the 'bad tree' denotes words and deeds of disbelief. As stated in the Ḥadīth quoted earlier, the 'bad tree' has been identified as: حَنظَل (*ḥanẓal*) and, according to others, it is garlic.

As for the 'bad tree,' the Qur'ān describes it by saying that its roots do not go deep into the earth, therefore, anyone can pull out the whole of it at will. This is what the expression: اُجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ (translated as: 'removed from the top soil) means - because the real meaning of the word: اُجْتُثَّتْ : (*ujtuththat*) is to remove the body of something as a whole.

That the deeds of a disbeliever have been likened to such a tree is fairly obvious. First of all, the beliefs of a disbeliever have no root or foundation. In no time, they would lose their ground. Secondly, they are affected by the filth of the world around them. Thirdly, the fruits of their tree, that is, their deeds, are worthless in the sight of Allah.

The Special Effect of 'Īmān

Described in the second verse (27) is the special effect of the 'Īmān or faith of a believer and the saying of *lā ilāha illallāh*: لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ: "Allah keeps the believers firm with the stable word in the worldly life and in the Hereafter". It means that the Kalimah Ṭayyibah, the pivotal guiding principle of a believer, is a 'stable word,' stable like a strong and firmly established tree which is kept standing powerfully and surviving eternally by Allah Ta'ālā, in this world, and in the Hereafter as well. However, the condition is that this blessed statement is uttered with unalloyed sincerity and that the sense of: لا اله اِلاّ اللّٰه (*lā ilāha illallāh* : there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah) is understood fully and clearly following which it should be adopted as the guiding principle of life.

In other words, one who believes in Kalimah Ṭayyibah is supported and strengthened with the grace of Allah Ta'ālā because of which he or she stands firm by this conviction right upto the time of death, no matter how many challenges and unwelcome happenings have to be encountered in its defence. As for the 'Ākhirah or the Hereafter, one is helped with this Kalimah when it is made to stay on and keep emitting its beneficial effects. It has been said in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī that "Ākhirah' (Hereafter) in this verse means Barzakh (the post-death and pre-Resurrection state of life) that is, the world of the grave.

The Reward and Punishment of the Grave Stand Proved from the Qur'ān and Sunnah

According to Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: When a believer will be questioned in the grave, he or she will remain firm on this Kalimah, even in a place so awesome and a state so punishing, of course, with Divine will and support, and bear witness to the blessed statement: *lā ilāha illallāh*. And then he said: This is what the saying of the Qur'ān: يُثَبِّتُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ (Allah keeps the believers firm with the stable word in the worldly life and in the Hereafter - 27) means. (This Ḥadīth was narrated by Sayyidnā Barā' ibn 'Āzib). Similar *aḥādīth* have

been reported from about forty Ṣaḥābah رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین with reliable chains of authorities which Ibn Kathīr has put together at this stage of his Tafsīr. Ash-Shaykh Jalāluddīn As-Suyuṭī, in his versified treatise At-Tathbīt 'Ind at-Tabyīt, and by referring to seventy *aḥādīth* in Sharḥ Aṣ-Ṣudūr, has confirmed that these narrations have come to us in an uninterrupted (*mutawātir*) succession. All these noble Ṣaḥābah رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین have declared that "Ākhirah' (Hereafter) in this verse refers to the grave and the verse itself relates to the reward and punishment of the grave.

That man, after his death and burial, lives again, answers the questions asked by the angels, then the coming of reward or punishment as a result of success or failure in this test has been mentioned in almost ten verses of the Holy Qur'ān, by way of hint; while, in seventy *mutawātir aḥādīth* (those passed on in uninterrupted succession), these have been mentioned very clearly and explicitly - in which there remains no room for a Muslim to doubt. As for the commonplace doubts like - 'in this world of our experience, nobody sees these rewards and punishments' - there is no room here to accomodate detailed answers to them. However, it is quite sufficient to understand that not being able to see something is no proof of its being not present. Nobody sees the Jinn and angels, but they are there. The air is not seen, but it is present there. The deep space which is being probed and examined in our time through rockets and space vehicles was something nobody could see before this, but it did exist. A dreamer dreams of being in some trouble in his dream, even writhes under the pain of punishment, but people around him remain totally unaware of what is happening to him.

As a matter of principle, it can be said that taking one world on the analogy of the conditions prevailing in the other is wrong by itself. When the Creator of the universe has told us through His Rasūl that once we pass on to another world, there is reward and punishment there, it becomes necessary for us to believe in it.

Towards the end of the verse (27), it was said: وَيُضِلُّ اللّٰهُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (And Allah lets the unjust go astray). It means: As for the believers, Allah Ta'ālā keeps them firm on Kalimah Ṭaiyyibah, the 'stable word' as a result of which things of comfort assemble around them right from the grave. But, the unjust, that is, the disbelievers and polytheists, remain

deprived of this Divine help and support. They cannot answer the questions asked in the grave by angles Munkar and Nakīr correctly. The outcome is that they start experiencing a sort of punishment right from that point onwards.

In the last sentence of verse 27, it was said: وَيَفْعَلُ اللّٰهُ مَا يَشَآءُ (And Allah does what He wills). It means that there is no power which can block His intention and will. Revered Ṣaḥābah, Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b, 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd and Ḥudhayfah ibn Yamān رضى الله عنهم اجمعين have said: For a believer, it is mandatory to believe that everything received by him or her was received through the intention and will of Allah. Not to have received it was impossible. Similarly, what was not received, it was not possible to have received that. And they said: If you do not believe in it, and place your trust in that, your abode is Hell.

Finally, said in verses 28 and 29 was:

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ بَدَّلُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ كُفْرًا وَّ اَحَلُّوْا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا وَبِئْسَ الْقَرَارُ

Have you not seen those who changed the favour of Allah with disbelief and landed their people in the house of destruction, the Jahannam? They shall enter it. And it is an evil abode.

Here, نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ (the favour of Allah) could mean the common physical blessings of Allah Ta'ālā. These are tangible and perceptible and relate to outward benefits of human beings such as food, drink, land, home and things like that. Then it could also mean spiritual blessings and favours as well which have come from Allah Ta'ālā for the guidance of human beings, for example, the prophets, the scriptures, and the signs of Divine power and wisdom which have been placed in every inch of the human existence, and in its countless creations, and in the heavens and its unfathomable and incomprehensible universe. All these serve as logistics for the guidance of human beings.

These two kinds of blessings and favours demanded that human beings should have recognized the greatness and the power of Allah Ta'ālā, been grateful to His gifts and devoted to His command. But, the disbelievers and the polytheists elected to shun gratitude and obedience and opted for ingratitude and disobedience. The result was that they led their people to their mutual abode of destruction, that is, in Hell.

The Lesson given by these verses

Described in these verses is the greatness, virtues, blissfulness and fruitfulness of the belief in the Oneness of Allah and in the Kalimah Ṭaiyyibah: لا اله الاّ الله (*lā ilāha illallāh*). Also identified there are the ill effect and evil outcome of refusing to believe in them. It goes without saying that Tauḥīd, the belief in the Oneness of Allah, is an everlasting treasure which is full of *barakah* in many ways. In the present world of our experience, it brings Divine support with it, and which continues after that too, in the 'Ākhirah and the grave. And the act of rejecting them amounts to changing what was the blessing and favour of Allah into what is punishment.

Verses 30 - 34

وَجَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ اَنْدَادًا لِّيُضِلُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ ؕ قُلْ تَمَتَّعُوْا فَاِنَّ مَصِيْرَكُمْ اِلَى
النَّارِ ﴿٣٠﴾ قُلْ لِّعِبَادِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يُقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا
رَزَقْنٰهُمْ سِرًّا وَّعَلَانِيَةً مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَّا بَيْعٌ فِيْهِ وَلَا خِلٰلٌ ﴿٣١﴾
اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَاَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَخْرَجَ
بِهٖ مِنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ ۚ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ لِتَجْرِيَ فِي الْبَحْرِ
بِاَمْرِهٖ ۚ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْاَنْهٰرَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَآئِبَيْنِ ۚ
وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَاٰتٰىكُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُ ؕ وَاِنْ
تَعُدُّوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ لَا تُحْصُوْهَا ؕ اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ لَظَلُوْمٌ كَفَّارٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

And they have set up partners with Allah, so that they may mislead (the people) from His path. Say, "Enjoy (for a while). Then your ultimate journey is to the Fire." [30]

Say to My believing servants that they should establish Ṣalāh and spend from what We have given to them, secretly and openly, before there comes a day in which there is neither trade nor friendship. [31]

Allah is the One who created the heavens and the earth and sent down water from the sky, then brought forth therewith sustenance for you out of the produce, and

subjugated the ships for you so that they may sail in the sea with His command, and subjugated for you the rivers. [32] **And He subjugated for you the sun and the moon, moving constantly, and subjugated for you the day and the night,** [33] **and He gave you whatever you asked for. And if you count the bounties of Allah, you cannot count them all. Surely, man is very unjust, very ungrateful.** [34]

Commentary

Appearing at the beginning of Sūrah Ibrāhīm there were subjects related to the mission of messengers and prophets, and to the states of one's ultimate return, and to the Hereafter. Mentioned after that was the commendation of the belief in Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah and, along with it, a condemnation of the profession of disbelief and the ascription of partners in the divinity of Allah which was clarified through examples. Then, those who adopted the later attitude were censured for the reason that they, rather than being grateful for the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā, chose to take the way of ingratitude and rejection.

Out of the verses cited above, the first deplores the behaviour of disbelievers and polytheists and points out to their evil end. The second verse describes the distinction of believers and tells them to abide by some Divine injunctions in order that they can fulfill the obligation of gratitude. In the third, fourth and fifth verses (32-34), by mentioning the great blessings of Allah Ta'ālā, people have been induced that they should not channelize and consume these blessings to promote acts of disobedience to Allah.

The Explanation of Verses

The word: أَنْدَادًا (*andād*) is the plural of نِدّ (*nidd*) which means like and equal. Idols are called *'andād'* because the disbelievers, through their deeds, used to regard them the like or equal of God. The word: تَمَتُّع (*tamattu'*) appearing in verse 30 means the driving of temporary benefit out of something. The verse censures the erratic view of disbelievers in that they had set up idols as partners with Allah, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked to warn these people of their coming end. Enjoy the blessings of the mortal world for a while, they were told, but their ultimate abode is the fire of Hell.

In the second verse (31), the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked:

(Though, the disbelievers of Makkah have turned their backs on the favour of Allah and have chosen the way of infidelity, a strange exchange indeed, so then) 'you tell my believing servants that they should establish Ṣalāh and be particular about it, and spend in the way of Allah from the sustenance We have given to them, spending it both secretly and openly.' This verse carries significant glad tidings for all believing servants of Allah, and showers on them a great honour indeed. To begin with, Allah Taʿālā has addressed them as 'His servants.' Then, He attributes the quality of faith to them. And then, He tells them how they can achieve eternal peace and comfort and honour, which is: Be particular and punctual in offering Ṣalāh. Avoid being sluggish when the time of Ṣalāh becomes due. Do not fall short in observing it as true to its required etiquette. And spend out of the sustenance given to you in My way as well. Here, both forms of spending have been declared to be permissible. This can be done secretly or openly. It means that Ṣadaqah and Khayrāt (charities in the way of Allah) can be given in a way that no one knows about it, or these can be done in a way that others could get to know about it. Some 'Ulamā say that the obligatory Zakāh and Ṣadaqatul-Fiṭr should be given openly so that others are prompted to do the same. As for voluntary (Nafl) Ṣadaqah and Khayrāt, it is better to give these secretly, so that there remains no danger of having done it for the sake of recognition and fair name. However, it all depends on one's intention (Niyyah) and attending conditions. If by doing it openly and publicly, there emerges the least likelihood of having done it for the sake of name and fame, the intrinsic merit of the charity (Ṣadaqah) so given is destroyed, whether obligatory (Farḍ) or voluntary (Nafl). If the intention is that others may also be induced to do the same, then, open and pronounced giving is permissible both in what is obligatory (Farḍ) and what is voluntary (*Nafl*).

Said in the last sentence of verse 31 was: مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِیَ یَوْمٌ لَّابَیْعٌ فِیْهِ وَلَا خِلٰلٌ (before there comes a day in which there is neither trade nor friendship). The word: خِلٰلٌ (*khilāl*) used here can be taken as the plural form of خُلَّةٌ (*khullah*) which means selfless friendship. Then, this word could also be taken as a verbal noun of the derived form of مفاعلة (*mufāʿalah*), such as *qitāl*, *difāʿ* etc. In that case, it would mean a friendship between two persons which is mutual and sincere. This sentence relates to both the in-

junctions of Ṣalāh and Ṣadaqah described above.

The core sense of the injunction is that now is the time to act. Allah Ta'ālā has blessed you with the necessary strength and time to make your Ṣalāh. And if you have missed any of your Ṣalāh in the past due to negligence, make amends and do the *qaḍā'* (replacement of missed Ṣalāh) for it. Similarly, your wealth is in your possession today and by spending it in the way of Allah you can make it work for you particularly for the good of your eternal life. But, lest you forget, the day is coming when both these options will be taken away from you. Neither will your bodies remain active enough to make your Ṣalāh, nor will you have any wealth in your possession which you could use to pay for rights wasted. And on that day, there is going to be no buying and selling, no transactions through which you could buy something, through which you could expiate for shortcomings and sins. And on that day, mutual friendships and personal relationships will not work as well. No friend, no matter how dear, will be able to carry the burden of sins committed by another, nor will he find any way to somehow remove the punishment due against him.

The word: يوم (*yowm*: a day) obviously means the day of Resurrection (Al-Ḥashr) and the day of Doom (Al-Qiyāmah). Then, it could also be said that it may be the day of one's death because all these signs start showing up immediately from the time of death when one is left without any ability to do anything, nor does wealth stay in the possession of its owner ready to leave the world of his experience behind.

Injunctions and Instructions

As for the statement that no friendship will work for anyone on the day of Qiyāmah (31), it means what will not work there will be friendships based solely on material interests. But, those who maintain friendships and relationships for the sake of Allah and for what is done to serve the interests of His revealed religion will still work at that time as well, for the good servants of Allah who are accepted in His sight will intercede on behalf of others as it has been reported in many *aḥādīth*. And the Qur'ān itself says: 'those who were friends to each other in the life of the world will turn into enemies to one another wishing to put the blame for their sin on a friend and absolve themselves of it, except those who fear Allah - 43:67.' This is so because there too the people of Taqwā,

those who act right in fear of Allah, will be able to put in a good word for each other by way of helping them out.

In the third, fourth and fifth verses (32-34), after recounting the major blessings of Allah Ta'ālā, human beings have been invited to worship and obey Him. They are told that it is Allah alone who has created the heavens and the earth on which depends the emergence and survival of human existence. Then, He sent water down from the sky through which He created produce of many kinds so that they can serve as sustenance for them. The word: اَلثَّمَرٰتِ (*ath-thamarāt*) is the plural form of ثَمَرَة (*thamarah*) which is the end product of everything. Therefore, included under '*ath-thamarāt*' is everything which becomes for human beings their food, dress or a home to live in - because, the word: رِزْق (*rizq*) translated as 'sustenance' in this verse covers all human needs. (Maẓharī)

After that it was said that Allah Ta'ālā has subjugated boats and ships to work for you for they move over the waters with His command. The word: سَخَّرَ (*sakhkhara*) appearing in this verse means that Allah Ta'ālā has made the use of these things easy on you. Of course, there is wood and steel and the instrumentation and technology to build boats and ships, but when it comes to having the intelligence and ability to use them correctly and expertly, it must be admitted that they were all given by Him. Therefore, those who feel proud of having invented, manufactured or produced things like that should better think twice and feel shy of ascribing all credit of such innovations to themselves. The simple reason is that things used in this process are things none of which was created by them, nor they could. How can someone who works with wood, iron, copper and things like that, utilizes them to serve his end product and then goes about declaring himself as its inventor? Otherwise, if we were to look at hard reality, it will not be difficult to realize that this very existence of ours, our hands and feet, our mind and our intelligence are not what we have made or invented.

After that, it was said that 'We have subjugated the sun and the moon for you' as they both keep moving, always in the same state. The word: دَائِبَيْنِ (*dā'ibayn*) is a derivation from دَأْب *da'b* which means habit. The sense is that moving at all times and under all conditions has been made the habit of these two planets as it never happens contrary to that. The expression: سَخَّرَ لَكُم (*sakhkhara lakum*: He subjugated for you) does

not mean that they should be moving on your command. Had the sun and the moon been subjugated for human beings in a way that they would be moving under human command, then, there would have been mutual differences among them with the result that one of them would demand that the sun should better rise today two hours later than usual because he had too much work to do in the night. And the other would want to have it rise two hours earlier than usual because he had too many daytime jobs at hand. Therefore, the great Lord did, in a way, subjugate the sun and the moon for human beings, but He did so in the sense that they have been subjugated to serve human beings all the time and under all conditions under a wise Divine arrangement - not that their rising and setting and their speed become subservient to human pleasure.

Similarly, the statement that 'We have subjugated the night and the day for you' also means that both of them have been put in the service of human beings to provide convenience and comfort.

Then, in the first sentence of verse 34, it was said: وَاٰتٰىكُمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ مَا سَاَلْتُمُوْهُ (And He gave you whatever you asked for) - though, what Allah Ta'ālā is pleased to give does not depend on being asked by someone for, the truth of the matter is, that we had never asked for our existence itself. This is what He gave to us in His infinite grace without the asking.

Similarly, who had raised hands of prayer that the skies, the earth, the moon, the sun and so many things other than them be created for us? The Master just gave all this to us without our asking for them. Therefore, Al-Qāḍī Al-Bayḍāwī has explained the meaning of this statement by saying: 'Allah Ta'ālā has given you everything which is worth asking for, even if you have not actually asked for it'. But, should it be that the meaning intended here is what the words literally suggest, still then, it poses no problem - for what man generally asks for is usually given to him anyway. However, wherever that which he asks for is not given to him in the outward form it was sought, then, in that there is some expedient consideration for the person asking or for the rest of the world, something he does not know about. But, He who is All-Knowing and All-Aware, He knows that, should that which he is asking for were to be given to him, it would become for him or for his family or for the whole world - a curse. In a situation like this, not giving what has been

asked for becomes, in itself, a great blessing. But man, because of his lack of knowledge, cannot realize that, therefore, he feels disappointed.

In the next sentence of verse 34, it was said: وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ لَا تُحْصُوْهَا (And if you count the bounties of Allah, you cannot count them all) that is, even if all human beings combined together were to count them, they would still remain uncountable. A human being is, as is, a little world, per se. In his or her eyes, nose, ears, hands, feet and in every joint, rather in every muscle and vein, hidden there are endless blessings through which this wonderful walking plant pulsating with hundreds of very delicate micro-machines keeps busy doing all sorts of things. Then, we have the mind-boggling range of Divine creations, up, on and down our earth, in seas and mountains which, despite the revealing research done in modern times and despite the devotion of thousands of experts who have spent their lives trying to determine such life forms, still remain undocumented or unidentified. Then, there is our own concept of Divine blessings whereby we tend to take things which are generally considered as blessings in a positive and perceptible way. In fact, blessings are not restricted by such a definition. If we remain safe from diseases, hardships, pain, loss and sorrows, that is a standing blessing in its own right. A person may suffer from so many diseases or discomforts of body and soul in this life and he or she could hardly be expected to keep a count of all that. From this we can guess that it is just impossible for anyone to count out the full array of the blessings, bounties and favours of Allah Ta'ālā.

Justice demanded that, in return for these countless blessings, equally countless acts of obedience to Allah and equally countless demonstrations of gratitude to Him should have been made mandatory. But, Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite grace, showed leniency towards intrinsic human weakness. The option granted was: When man looks at reality and confesses that fulfilling the demands of the obligatory gratitude is not within his control, then, this very confession has been declared to be sufficient as the alternate of the ideal fulfillment of the obligation of gratitude - as was said by Allah Ta'ālā when Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام made a similar confession: الأن قد شكرت يا داؤد which means that his making this confession is sufficient to show his gratefulness.

At the end of the verse (34), it was said: إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُوْمٌ كَفَّارٌ (Surely, man

is very unjust, very ungrateful). It means that he should face hardship with patience, keep his words and feelings free from any complaint thinking that the fate he faces has come from a wise Master and that too, being in His infinite Wisdom is nothing but a blessing, and when he is blessed with what is good and comforting, let him be thankful for it from his heart both verbally and practically - as is the dictate of justice. But, common human habit works differently from this norm. A little discomfort or pain would make them lose patience and go about broadcasting their problem. And if they find some blessing or a little wealth, they would get intoxicated with it and forget all about Allah Ta'ālā, their Benefactor. Therefore, in a verse appearing earlier (5), the attribute of sincere believers has been identified as Ṣabbār (very patient) and Shakūr (very grateful).

Verses 35 -41

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرٰهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا الْبَلَدَ اٰمِنًا وَّاجْنُبْنِيْ وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَّعْبُدَ
الْأَصْنَامَ ﴿٣٥﴾ رَبِّ إِنَّهُنَّ أَضْلَلْنَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ ۚ فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِيْ فَإِنَّهٗ
مِنِّيْ ۚ وَمَنْ عَصَانِيْ فَإِنَّكَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾ رَبَّنَآ إِنِّيْٓ أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ
ذُرِّيَّتِيْ بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِيْ زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ ۙ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ
فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِيْٓ إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ رَبَّنَآ إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِيْ وَمَا نُعْلِنُ ۗ وَمَا يَخْفٰى عَلَى
اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَآءِ ﴿٣٨﴾ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ
وَهَبَ لِيْ عَلَى الْكِبَرِ إِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَإِسْحٰقَ ۗ إِنَّ رَبِّيْ لَسَمِيْعُ الدُّعَآءِ ﴿٣٩﴾
رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِيْ مُقِيْمَ الصَّلٰوةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِيْ ۖ رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَآءِ ﴿٤٠﴾ رَبَّنَا
اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ يَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤١﴾ ع

And when Ibrāhīm said, "My Lord, make this city peaceful, and keep me and my children away from worshiping idols. [35] **My Lord, they have certainly misled many a people. So, the one who follows me is surely mine, and the one who disobeys me, then You are Most Forgiving,**

Very Merciful. [36]

Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in a valley of no vegetation, close to Your sanctified House, so that, Our Lord, they may establish Ṣalāh. So make hearts of a number of people yearn toward them, and provide them with fruits, so that they may be grateful. [37] **Our Lord, surely You know what we conceal and what we reveal. And hidden from Allah is nothing whatsoever, neither in the earth nor in the heavens.** [38] **Praise be to Allah who, despite my old age, blessed me with Ismā'īl and Isḥāq. Surely, my Lord is the One who hears the prayer.** [39] **My Lord, make me steadfast in Ṣalāh, and from among my children as well. And, Our Lord, grant my prayer.** [40] **Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and all believers on the day when reckoning shall take place."** [41]

Commentary

Stated in the previous verses was the rational strength and cardinal position of Tauḥīd, the belief in the Oneness of Allah. And also mentioned there in contrast was the gross ignorance of Shirk, the ascribing of partners in the pristine divinity of Allah, and a condemnation thereof. Among the group of prophets عليهم السلام, the most successful Jihād waged to establish pure monotheism was that of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Therefore, the religion preached by him is known particularly as the upright religion.

In view of this, reference has been made to the story of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in the cited verses. However, there is another reason too. In a previous verse (28): الَّذِيْنَ بَدَّلُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ كُفْرًا (those who changed the favour of Allah with disbelief), condemned were people from among the disbelievers of Makkah who had changed faith for disbelief and Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah) for Shirk (ascribing of partners to Allah) because that was what their forefathers have been doing. They have been told in these verses about the belief and behaviour of their patriarch, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام so that these people so eager to follow the lead of their ancestors would just look at this model and would, hopefully, abstain from their disbelief. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

And as it is already clear to us that by describing the stories and conditions of blessed prophets, the Qur'ān never aims to narrate their histo-

ry only. Instead of that, in them there are guiding principles for every department of human life. It is to make them become available continuously that these events about prophets are repeated in the Qur'ān time and again.

At this place, there are in the first verse (35) two prayers made by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ: (1) رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هٰذَا الْبَلَدَ اٰمِنًا : 'My Lord, make this city (of Makkah) peaceful.' This prayer appears in Sūrah Al-Baqarah (2:126) as well. But, there the word: بَلَد (*balad* : city) appears as: بَلَدًا (*baladan*) without the definite article *Alif Lām* which means an indefinite city. The reason is that this prayer belonged to a time when the city of Makkah was not inhabited. Therefore, the words of the prayer made were general when he said: 'My Lord, make this a city of peace.'

In the prayer which he made when Makkah was already a populated city, he made a definite reference to the city of Makkah saying: 'My Lord, make this city peaceful.'

(2) The second prayer made by him was: 'and keep me and my children away from worshiping idols.'

Though, prophets on whom be peace are protected by Allah, so Shirk, idol-worship, or a sin cannot issue forth from them. But, in this prayer, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ has included himself as well. The reason for this is either that prophets too live under a constant fear of being in danger, or that his main purpose was to pray for the safety of his children against the danger of disbelief and idol-worship. It was to impress his children with the gravity of the matter that he included himself too within the prayer.

Allah *jalla thanā'uh* granted the prayer of His 'friend.' His children remained protected from Shirk and idol-worship. This brings up a question. The people of Makkah are generally from among the progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ. Idol-worship was very much present with them. Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ answers it on the authority of Sufyān ibn 'Uyaiynah that no one from among the progeny of Sayyidnā Ismā'īl ﷺ did really take to idol-worship. In fact, when people of the tribe of Jurhum took over Makkah and expelled the children of Sayyidnā Ismā'īl ﷺ from the Ḥaram, they carried away with them some stones from there out of love and respect for the sacred place. These they used to

keep as a momento of the sacred House of Allah before them when they worshipped or went round them making Ṭawāf. Initially, in doing so, they had no desire to turn back from Allah. They thought that the way making prayers turning towards Baytullah or making Ṭawāf round it was nothing but devoting to the worship of Allah, so when they turn to that stone from there and make their Ṭawāf round it, that would not be counter to the worship of Allah. After a passage of time, this very method became the cause of idol-worship.

In the second verse (36), he gives the reason for making this prayer. He said that he sought refuge from idol-worship because it has led many a people astray. He said so because he had seen his father and his people falling victims to the custom of idol-worship which had left them deprived of all possibilities of betterment in their lives.

In the closing sentence of the verse, it was said: فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (So, the one who follows me is surely mine, and the one who disobeys me, then You are Most Forgiving, Very Merciful). It means that one who keeps faith and abides by good deeds could obviously hope to be blessed, but should there be someone who disobeys his prophet, then, his case rests with the forgiveness and mercy of Allah. If disobedience referred to here is taken to be restricted to evils deeds, a form of disobedience to Allah in practice, then, the meaning is obvious, that is, they too could hope to be forgiven by His good grace. And if disobedience is taken to mean disbelief, denial and rejection, then, equally obvious is the fact that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had already been told that there was no forgiveness for the Kāfir (disbeliever) and Mushrik (one who ascribes partners to Allah) and that he should not intercede on behalf of them. After that, expressing the hope of their forgiveness cannot be correct. Therefore, in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, it was said: At this place, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has not used words which would suggest a recommendation or prayer. He did not say that they be forgiven. Nevertheless, he was a prophet with abounding mercy which encompasses his disbelievers too. Every prophet wishes from the deep recesses of his heart that no one should ever be subjected to Divine punishment, not even a disbeliever. So, it was this elemental wish of his that he expressed when he said: 'then You are Most Forgiving, Very Merciful.' He did not say precisely that they be forgiven and treated mercifully. This is similar to what

Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام said about the disbelievers of his community: وَإِنْ تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (and if You forgive them, then, You are the Mighty, the Wise - 5:118) which, in other words, would mean: If You were to forgive them, then, You have the Might and the Wisdom. You can do everything and there is no one to stop You.

Thus, these two blessed souls did not take the initiative of recommending forgiveness for disbelievers as it was contrary to the etiquette due before Allah. But, at the same time, they also did not say that those disbelievers be punished by Him. Instead of doing that, they remained respectful yet, in a manner of their own, gave vent to their elemental wish that they too may be forgiven.

Injunctions and Instructions

As for a *du'ā'*, (prayer) everyone makes it. But, everyone does not know how to. The prayers made by the blessed prophets are lesson-oriented. They teach us how to ask. And they tell us what is worth asking for. This prayer by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is in two parts. The first part pleads that Makkah be made the city of peace, free of all security threats, while the second part seeks that he and his children be delivered from idol-worship for ever.

If we think about it, these are the two very basic principles of human betterment - because, should human beings remain insecure where they live or remain under the apprehension that their country would be attacked by an enemy, their lives can never be pleasant, neither materially, nor spiritually. Everything done in this world, for profit or pleasure, depends on peace. There can be no two opinions at least about that. A person threatened by all sorts of dangers to his peace and security would naturally find the best of blessings he is surrounded with - dining and retiring in palaces, villas and mansions with possession and wealth abounding - all too sour to savor.

Even in terms of one's religious orientation, one can show his obedience to Divine commands only when one has the necessary peace to do so.

Therefore, in the first prayer made by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, included there are all aspects of human well-being, whether material or spiritual. Through this one sentence uttered by the Friend of Allah, Sayy-

idnā Ibrāhīm, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him, he has asked for his children everything that matters in this world.

We also learn from this prayer that emotional concern for one's children, and the arrangement of economic sufficiency and comfort for them is one of the obligations placed on the father, to the best of his ability and capacity. To make efforts for this purpose is not contrary to (what has been said about) *Zuhd* (having no greed for the worldly pleasures).

Then comes the second prayer. This too has great comprehensiveness because Shirk and idol-worship are sins for which there is no forgiveness, therefore, he has asked for being shielded against them. If a sin gets to be committed after that, it can also be expiated through other deeds, and such sins could also be forgiven through someone's intercession. And if we take the 'worship of idols' mentioned in the text in its broader sense as taken by the noble mystics, that is, everything which makes man heedless to Allah is his idol, and overcome by its love, when man takes the initiative and disobeys Allah, this then is, in a way, its worship. So, in this prayer, that is, to be kept away from idol-worship, there is a coverage of being kept away from all sins. It is in this sense that some noble mystics of Islam have admonished their self against heedlessness and disobedience to the Creator; or, as the great gnostic Rūmī says: 'Every (evil) desire is an idol in your way.'

Brimming with wisdom, there is another prayer of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام which appears in the third verse (37) as follows: رَبَّنَآ اِنِّیۡۤ اَسۡکَنۡتُ : 'Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in a valley of no vegetation [nor any other obvious life support system] close to Your sanctified House, so that, Our Lord, they may establish Ṣalāh. So, make hearts of a number of people yearn towards them [to make them familiar with each other], and provide them with fruits, so that they may be grateful.'

The event which marks the making of this prayer by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام goes back to the time when Allah Ta'ālā intended to have the edifice of Baytullah which was destroyed in the Deluge during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام reconstructed. He chose His 'friend,' Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام for this mission, arranging for him to migrate from Syria with wife, Sayyidah Hājira and son, Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام and settle down in that barren place. This he was appointed to do.

It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام was an infant at that time. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, as ordered, had him and his mother, Sayyidah Hājira stay near the present Baytullah and the well of Zamzam. At that time, this place was an open and barren ground surrounded by hills. There was no water and no habitation in sight. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had thoughtfully put some food in a provision-bag and water in a water-bag.

Thereafter, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was commanded to return to Syria. The spot where he received this command was the spot from where he started his journey as commanded. That there was the natural effect of having to leave his wife and infant son in this wilderness on him will become evident from the prayer which he made a little later, but he did not tolerate the idea of making the least delay in carrying out the Divine command, not even for a few moments which he could have used to inform Sayyidah Hājira and say a few words of comfort to her.

As a result, when Sayyidah Hājira saw him going away, she repeatedly called from behind him wondering why would he leave them in that manner and in a place which had no human being around nor was there anything which could help them survive. But, the 'friend' of Allah did not look back. Thereupon, Sayyidah Hājira realized that one who is the 'friend' of Allah cannot betray them in that manner. Perhaps, this is nothing but a command from Allah Ta'ālā. So, she called again and asked: 'Has Allah Ta'ālā commanded you to leave this place?' Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام turned his face and said: 'Yes.' Hearing this, Sayyidah Hājira said: ' إِذًا لَا يُضَيِّعُنَا ' that is, 'Now it does not matter. Our Master, who has commanded you to leave this place, will certainly not let us be wasted away.'

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام kept going ahead until he reached close to a hill from where he could no more see Sayyidah Hājira and Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليهما السلام. That was the time when he turned his attention towards Baytullah and prayed in the words mentioned in the verse (37).[1] Many religious instructions and rulings issue forth from this prayer of

1. According to this interpretation, it is only the prayer mentioned in Verse (37) that was made at this time. As for the prayer mentioned in the verse (35) it was made at a later stage, when Makkah was already a populated city. Therefore, there is no contradiction between this statement and the comment made on the verse 35. (Editor)

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ. These are being taken up in some details as given below.

The Wisdom of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm's Prayer

1. We see that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ has accomplished two things very distinctly. On the one hand, he fulfills his obligation to his status as the Khalīl or Friend of Allah. When and where he was commanded to leave for the country of Syria, he took no time in leaving his wife and infant son in a desolate wilderness. When he was saying yes to the Divine command, he did not show the least hesitation. He did what he was asked to do right away. He did not tolerate the idea of postponing or delaying even to the natural limit whereby he would first go to his blessed wife, say some words of comfort to her and tell her that he is under Divine orders to leave about which she should not worry. This he did not do. What he did was: When and where came the Divine command, he obeyed it and moved ahead right on.

On the other hand, he did not neglect the rights of his family on him and paid the debt of their love in his own way. Once he could see them no more from behind a hill on his way, he prayed before Allah Taʽālā that they be protected and blessed with peace. Thus, he had asked good life for them because he was confident, and at peace with himself. He knew that a prayer made after having carried out the Divine command first would never be rejected by the merciful Lord. And this is what happened actually. The helpless infant and his equally helpless mother found shelter. Not only that they settled there all alone and by themselves, a whole city flowered with people around them and for their sake; and furthermore, the matter did not end at the fulfillment of the needs of their lives lived in peace, but it is for their sake that the doors of all sorts of blessing are still open to the people of Makkah.

This is prophetic steadfastness, and the beauty of balance; when considering one aspect, they would never ignore the other. The prophets are not like common mystics who are overpowered by the state they are in (*maghlūb al-ḥāl*). Prophets educate. It is their education which goes on to make man perfect, universal.

Now, let us go to some significant statements made in this prayer. They are from verse 37 and are being taken up in the order they appear

there.

2. غَيْرِ ذِى زَرْعٍ (valley of no vegetation): When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was commanded by Allah Ta'ālā that he should leave his infant son and his mother in that barren land and go to Syria, he had become certain from the command itself that Allah Ta'ālā would not let them perish, instead, they would, at least, be provided with water somehow. That is why he did not say: بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِى مَاءٍ (in a valley with no water). What he said was: غَيْرِ ذِى زَرْعٍ (in a valley of no vegetation). Therefore, he requested that they be blessed with 'fruits' - even if they had to be brought in from somewhere else. This is the reason why Makkah al-Mukarramah does not have any significant areas of cultivation even to this day. But, fruits from all over the world, the produce and product of things of all sorts reach there in such numbers and variety that it would be difficult to find a similar arrangement in many cities. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

3. The next sentence: عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ (close to Your sanctified House) proves that the foundation of Baytullah had been laid out before the appearance of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام as proved by the leading commentator, Al-Qurṭubī on the authority of several narrations under his commentary on Sūrah Al-Baqarah. According to him, the structure of Baytullah was first raised by Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام at the time when he was sent to the earth and was made to reach at this place from the Mountain of Sarandip through a miracle. Angel Jibrā'īl directed him to the site of Baytullah. Accordingly, Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام raised its structure. He and his children used to do Ṭawāf round it until came the Deluge during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام when the sacred Baytullah was raised up (as trust), but its foundations remained embedded under the earth. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was commanded to build the Baytullah anew on the already existing foundations. These were identified and shown to him by Sayyidnā Jibrā'īl. After that, when this Abrahimic structure collapsed during the age of Arab Jāhiliyyah, the Quraysh of that period rebuilt it. When its construction work was in progress, Abū Ṭālib along with the Holy Prophet ﷺ participated in it, which was before he wasmade prophet.

Here, Baytullah has been qualified as: مُحَرَّمٌ (*muḥarram*) which means 'sanctified,' but could also mean 'protected.' The great Baytullah has both attributes. It has always been sanctified and esteemed, and always

protected from enemies as well.

4. The next statement: لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ (so that they may establish Ṣalāh) is significant in that it was the first prayer he made soon after mentioning the helplessness of his infant son and his mother. His prayer was that they be made particular and punctual in their obligation of Ṣalāh as due because Ṣalāh is a cumulative recepticle of everything good and blissful in life, mortal or eternal. This tells us that there can be no greater concern, or love or desire for the betterment of children than that they be made to become particular and punctual with their Ṣalāh. Finally, there is something here we should not miss to note. Though, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had left behind at that time and at that place only a mother and her child, but the prayer he made was in the plural form. This tells us that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had come to know that this place will have a populated city of its own and the line of this child will flourish and go far in time. Therefore, he included all of them in his prayer.

5. In the next sentence: اَفْئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ (hearts of a number of people), the word: اَفْئِدَه (*afidah*) is the plural of: فُؤَاد (*fu'ād*) which means heart. Here, the word: '*afidah*' has been introduced in its indefinite form along with the particle: مِن (*min*) which is used for reducing, dividing and portioning. Hence, the meaning is: 'make hearts of a number of people yearn towards them). Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid says: If this reductive particle was not there in this prayer, instead, said there would have been: اَفْئِدَةَ النَّاسِ (hearts of the people), then, Muslims, non-Muslims, Jews, Christians, virtually people of the whole world from the East to West would have converged on Makkah, which would have become a cause of inconvenience for them. It was in view of this reality that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, in his prayer, used the words: 'make hearts of a number of people yearn towards them.'

6. In the next sentence: وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِّنَ الثَّمَرٰتِ (and provide them with fruits), the word: اَلثَّمَرٰتُ (*ath-thamarāt*) is the plural of: ثَمْرَة (*thamrah*) which means fruit. Customarily, they refer to fruits which are eaten. Given that sense of 'fruit,' the prayer would mean: 'provide them with all sorts of fruits to eat.'

However, *thamrah* or fruit is also used in the sense of outcome and

produce which is more general than things edible. The outcome of everything beneficial can be called its *thamrah* or fruit. Thus, the fruits of industries would be their products. The fruit of a job or work would be the pay or wages received as a result. In a verse of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ, also used there is the expression: ثَمَرٰتُ كُلِّ شَیْءٍ (fruits [or produce] of all things - 28:57). Here, instead of using the word: شَجَر (*shajar* : tree), what has been used is the word: شَیْء (*sha'ii* : thing). Perhaps, this may be indicating that for these people Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has not simply prayed for the provision of fruits to eat. Rather, the prayer he has made is for the end product of everything which includes the products and produce and use-worthy things of all kinds, and again, with earnest pleading and humble plaint alongwith the recounting of praises for Allah Ta'ālā, then, this would be a manner in which it can be strongly hoped that the prayer will be answered.

Verses 42 - 52

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَافِلًا عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ط اِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ
تَشْخَصُ فِيْهِ الْاَبْصَارُ ﴿٤٢﴾ مُهْطِعِيْنَ مُقْنِعِيْ رُءُوْسِهِمْ لَا يَرْتَدُّ اِلَيْهِمْ
طَرْفُهُمْ ج وَاَفْـِٕدَتُهُمْ هَوَآءٌ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَاَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ يَوْمَ يَاْتِيْهِمُ الْعَذَابُ
فَيَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا رَبَّنَآ اَخِّرْنَآ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ قَرِيْبٍ لا نُّجِبْ دَعْوَتَكَ
وَنَتَّبِعِ الرُّسُلَ ط اَوَلَمْ تَكُوْنُوْٓا اَقْسَمْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ زَوَالٍ ﴿٤٤﴾
وَّسَكَنْتُمْ فِيْ مَسٰكِنِ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا
بِهِمْ وَضَرَبْنَا لَكُمُ الْاَمْثَالَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَقَدْ مَكَرُوْا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ
مَكْرُهُمْ ط وَاِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ لِتَزُوْلَ مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّٰهَ
مُخْلِفَ وَعْدِهٖ رُسُلَهٗ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٤٧﴾ يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْاَرْضُ
غَيْرَ الْاَرْضِ وَالسَّمٰوٰتُ وَبَرَزُوْا لِلّٰهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَتَرَى
الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّقَرَّنِيْنَ فِي الْاَصْفَادِ ﴿٤٩﴾ سَرَابِيْلُهُمْ مِّنْ قَطِرَانٍ
وَّتَغْشٰى وُجُوْهَهُمُ النَّارُ ﴿٥٠﴾ لِيَجْزِيَ اللّٰهُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ ط اِنَّ

اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٥١﴾ هٰذَا بَلٰغٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنْذَرُوْا بِهٖ وَلِيَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا
هُوَ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ وَّلِيَذَّكَّرَ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿٥٢﴾

And never think that Allah is unaware of what the wrongdoers are doing. He is but giving them respite upto a day when the eyes shall remain upraised (in terror). [42] **They shall be rushing with their heads raised upward; their eyes shall not return towards them and their hearts shall be hollow.** [43]

And warn the people of a day when punishment comes upon them, and the wrongdoers will say, "Our Lord, give us respite for a short period, and we will respond to Your call and will follow the messengers." (Allah will say), "Is it not that you had sworn earlier that you would not have to leave (the world)? [44] **And you dwelt in the dwellings of those who wronged themselves, and it became clear to you how We dealt with them, and We put forth for you the examples."** [45] **And they worked out their plot and whatever they plot is before Allah, even though their plot is such as would move the mountains.** [46]

So, do not think that Allah will do against His promise to His messengers. Surely, Allah is Mighty, the Lord of Retribution [47] **--- the day on which this earth will be turned into some other earth, and the skies as well. And they all shall appear before Allah, the One, the All-Dominant.** [48]

And on that day you will see the culprits shackled together in chains, [49] **their shirts of rosin,* and their faces covered with Fire** [50] **--- so that Allah repays everyone what he earned. Indeed, Allah is swift at reckoning.** [51]

This is a message for mankind, so that they (take lesson and) be warned, and so that they may know that He is One God, and so that the people of understanding may take to the advice. [52]

Commentary

Mentioned in Sūrah Ibrāhīm were some details of matters relating to

* Stands for *'Qaṭirān'*, the original Qur'ānic word which means a highly inflammable oil extracted from the Pine-tree.

prophets and their peoples, the evil end of those who opposed Divine injunctions and, later on, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام himself, who constructed the Baytullah, and for whose children Allah Ta'ālā made a community rise around them in Makkah al-Mukarramah, and provided for all its inhabitants perfect peace and extraordinary economic facilities, and it is his children, the Banū Ismā'īl, who are the first addressees of the Glorious Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

In this last section of Sūrah Ibrāhīm, the same people of Makkah have been exhorted to take a lesson from what had happened to past peoples; and, in a nutshell, they have been warned that, should they still not return to their senses, they better be ready to face the horrendous punishment of the day of Qiyāmah.

Initially, the first verse (42) is to comfort the Holy Prophet عليه السلام and the oppressed of the world, then, it releases the threat of a severe punishment for all oppressors - that the unjust practitioners of crime should not become carefree because Allah Ta'ālā has given them respite. Let them not be deluded by the idea that Allah is not aware of their wrongdoings for which reason they are flourishing despite their crimes and for which reason nothing unwelcome happens to them, nor does any punishment visit them. This is not true. Instead of all that they presuppose, everything they are doing is all within the sight of Allah Ta'ālā, but He, in His mercy and wisdom, is giving them respite.

In this verse: وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَافِلًا (And never think that Allah is unaware of what the wrongdoers are doing), the address is obviously to every such person whom his own negligence, and Shayṭān, have tricked to believe in something like that. And should it be that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself is the addressee here, still then, the purpose of saying this would be to let the negligent of the community hear it and be warned - because, there exists just no possibility that the Holy Prophet ﷺ would, God forbid, ever think that Allah Ta'ālā is unaware or indifferent to what is happening.

In the second verse (43), it has been said that the postponement of sudden punishment against these unjust people is not any better for them because, ultimately, they will be seized in the great punishment of the Qiyāmah and the 'Ākhirah which will overtake them all of a sudden.

The details of this punishment in the life to come and the horrendous happenings to be experienced there keep appearing right upto the end of the verse:

لِيَوْمٍ تَشْخَصُ فِيهِ الْأَبْصَارُ

A day when the eyes shall remain upraised (in terror).

مُهْطِعِينَ مُقْنِعِي رُءُوسِهِمْ

They shall be rushing with their heads raised upward.

لَا يَرْتَدُّ إِلَيْهِمْ طَرْفُهُمْ

Their eyes shall not return towards them.

وَأَفْئِدَتُهُمْ هَوَآءٌ

And their hearts shall be hollow.

After the shape of things to come upon them has been stated, the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who has been asked to warn his people of the punishment of that day, the day on which the unjust and the wrong-doing will have no choice but to call their Lord for some more time to return to the world they knew so that they could say yes to the call of prophets and follow them this time and may thereby have their deliverance from this punishment. The answer to their request will come from Allah Taʿālā wherein it will be said: This is what you are saying now. Is it not that you had been giving sworn statements to the effect that your wealth and power shall never part with you, and that you shall go on living in the world just like that, in comfort and luxury, for ever; and is it not that you had rejected the idea that you will live again and that there was a world hereafter?

In verse 45:

وَسَكَنْتُمْ فِي مَسٰكِنِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوٓا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ وَضَرَبْنَا لَكُمُ الْأَمْثَالَ۔

> And you dwelt in the dwelling of those who wronged themselves, and it became clear to you how We dealt with them and We put forth for you the examples,

as obvious, the address is to the Mushriks of Arabia. These were the people the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked to warn: أَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ (And warn the peo-

ple - 44). In this address, they have been asked to take their guard against what could happen to them as a result of their heedlessness. They could learn a lesson from what had happened to past peoples. The conditions they faced and the revolutions that overtook them could become their teacher. Yet, it is astonishing that they would still prefer not to learn a lesson - even though, they live in the very homes once occupied by peoples destroyed in punishment and walk around neighbourhoods once walked by them. The truth is that they know by direct observation, and by what some continuing reports have told them that terrible was the punishment which Allah Ta'ālā inflicted on them because of their acts of disobedience. The advice and the examples given here were to bring them to see truth and take the straight path, but it was certainly strange that they would still not listen and learn to act right.

Said in verse 46 was:

وَقَدْ مَكَرُوْا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ مَكْرُهُمْ ط وَاِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ لِتَزُوْلَ مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ

> And they worked out their plot and whatever they plot is before Allah, even though their plot is such as would move the mountains.

which can be explained further by saying that those people tried to demolish the true faith and put in action their deadliest plans to bring harm to Muslims who had embraced the call of truth. But, all plans made by them, open or concealed, lie exposed before Allah Ta'ālā who is fully aware of them, and comprehensively capable of foiling them - even though, their plots were so precise and lethal that they would have made mountains back out from their place, but finally, nothing worked before the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā.

The hostile plots and plans mentioned here may possibly mean the plots and plans made by people destroyed in the past, for example, Nimrud, Pharaoh, the people of 'Ād and Thamūd and others. And it is also possible that the text is referring to the Mushriks of Arabia who hatched many deep-seated and far-reaching conspiracies against the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but they were all foiled by Allah Ta'ālā.

There are a good many commentators who have taken the word: اِنْ (*in*) appearing in: وَاِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ (even though their plot) as a particle of negation and explain the verse to mean that 'though they made many plots

but it was not possible for their plots to make mountains move away from their place - and the mountain here means the high determination of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which remained totally unaffected by any of the moves made by the disbelievers.

After that, it was to let this be heard by the Muslim community, the Holy Prophet ﷺ - or everyone thus addressed - was given a note of caution by saying:

فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللّٰهَ مُخْلِفَ وَعْدِهٖ رُسُلَهٗ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ

> So, do not think that Allah will do against His promise [of support, victory and success] to His messengers. Surely, Allah is Mighty, the Lord of Retribution - 47

and that He would definitely retaliate against the enemies of His messengers and fulfill the promises made to them.

In the verses which appear onwards from here (48-51), the text returns to the awe-inspiring happenings of the day of Qiyāmah. It is said:

يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْاَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْاَرْضِ وَالسَّمٰوٰتُ وَ بَرَزُوْا لِلّٰهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ

> The day on which this earth will be turned into some other earth, and the skies as well. And they all shall appear before Allah, the One, the All-Dominant.

The statement that the earth and the sky will be turned into some other earth and sky may also mean that their distinctive characteristics and appearances will be changed. There are other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, and narrations from Ḥadīth, which say that the whole earth will be transformed into a levelled surface having no house, tree, mountain and mound blocking the view, nor shall there remain any cave and abyss. It is this very state of change which the Qur'ān refers to elsewhere in the following words: لَا تَرٰى فِيْهَا عِوَجًا وَّلَآ اَمْتًا (you will not see in it any crookedness, or curvature - 20:107). It means that things will not remain the way they are. Roads and pathways we see today wind their way past buildings and mountains negotiating all sorts of twists and turns on surfaces high and low. This will change and the whole thing would turn into flat, unobstructed ground.

And this act of changing the earth and the sky could also be taken to

mean that another set of the earth and the sky would be made in the place of the present ones. Out of the narrations of Ḥadīth reported on this subject, only some of them seem to indicate either a change in features only while others suggest a change of the thing itself.

Ḥadīth authority, Al-Baihaqī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ as based on authentic chains of narration that, about this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'The ground of Al-Maḥshar (the plain of Resurrection) will be brand new, radiant white like silver. And this earth surface would be such that no sin would have been committed over it by anyone, and on which no blood belonging to someone killed unjustly would have been shed.' The same subject appears in the Ḥadīth reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad and Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr, as narrated by Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

In the Ṣaḥīḥayn (the two Ṣaḥīḥs) of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, there is a narration from Sayyidnā Sahl Ibn Sa'd ﷺ which reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, people will be resurrected on an earth surface which will be clean and white like refined pita bread with no trace of anything else (such as house, garden, tree, mountain, mound etc.,). Al-Biahaqī has reported the same subject from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ as in his Tafsīr of this particular verse.

And Ḥākim, backed by a strong chain of authority, has reported from a narration of Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, this earth will be stretched like leather so that its wrinkles and crinkles are smoothed out (because of which caves and mountains of the earth would be all levelled down turning it into a flat surface), and at that time gathered on these plains there shall be the whole progeny of Ādam. Such will be the multitude of people that one human being would have only as much land in his or her share as he or she can stand on. Then, I shall be the first to be called on the plains of Resurrection. There I shall fall down in prostration before the Almighty Lord, and when I shall be given the permission to intercede, I shall intercede for the whole creation so that they go through the reckoning of their deeds swiftly.'

This last report obviously seems to indicate that the change made in the earth will be restricted to a change in its physical features, that is, caves, mountains, buildings and trees will not remain there. But, the earth itself will remain as it is. And all other narrations mentioned earlier tell us that the earth of the day of Resurrection (Al-Maḥshar) will be an earth other than the present one. As for the change mentioned in this verse, it means the change of the earth itself.

In Bayān al-Qur'ān, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī رحمة الله عليه has said that there is no contradiction here. It is possible that the features of the present earth will be changed at the time the first Horn is blown, then people will be transferred to some other earth for the purpose of reckoning of deeds.

A saying of Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah ﷺ appearing in the Musnad of 'Abd ibn al-Ḥumaid and reported in Tafsīr Maẓharī supports the view given above. The words used there can be translated as: 'This earth will contract and it will have another earth by its side on which people will stand for reckoning.'

As based on a narration of Sayyidnā Thawbān ﷺ, it has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim that a Jewish rabbi came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked him: When this earth is changed, where would people be? He said: They would be in a dark area near the Bridge of Ṣirāt.

From here we also learn that people will be transferred from the present earth over to the other through the Bridge of Ṣirāt. And Ibn Jarīr has reported from several Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn in his Tafsīr that the present earth and all its rivers will turn into fire at that time. In other words, all this territory which now holds the population of the world will become the territory of Hell. However, the reality of things is known to Allah Ta'ālā alone. A servant of His can do nothing but to live by his committment to Him and not go about seeking the cause of His workings.

In verses 50 and 51 towards the end, given there is the state in which the people of Jahannam will find themselves. Culprits will be shackled

together in chains, that is, each group huddled separately and then shackled together. And the dress they would be made to wear will be from *'Qaṭirān'* which is a highly inflammable tar-like oil and would catch fire instantly.

Finally, in the last verse (52), it was made clear that the description of conditions to be faced by people on the day of Qiyāmah was to warn them so that they would realize that there is no Being worthy of worship and obedience except the One Being of Allah Ta'ālā, and so that whoever from among them has some sense left in him or her would desist from Shirk while there was still the time to do so.

With the help and grace of Allah Ta'ālā
The Commentary on
Sūrah Ibrāhīm
ends here.

Sūrah Al-Ḥijr

Sūrah al-Ḥijr was revealed in Makkah and it has 99 Verses and 6 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 5

الٓرٰ قف تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ وَقُرْاٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿۱﴾ رُبَمَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْ
كَانُوْا مُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿۲﴾ ذَرْهُمْ يَاْكُلُوْا وَيَتَمَتَّعُوْا وَيُلْهِهِمُ الْاَمَلُ فَسَوْفَ
يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۳﴾ وَمَآ اَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ اِلَّا وَلَهَا كِتَابٌ مَّعْلُوْمٌ ﴿۴﴾ مَا تَسْبِقُ
مِنْ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ ﴿۵﴾

Alif, Lām, Rā. **These are verses of the Book, the Qur'ān which makes things clear.** [1]

On occasions, the disbelievers would wish that they were Muslims. [2] **Let them eat and enjoy, and let (their) fancy make them neglectful, for they shall soon come to know.** [3]

And We did not destroy any town, but it had a pre-determined decree. [4] **No people can precede their appointed time nor can they exceed it.** [5]

Commentary

From: ذَرْهُمْ يَاْكُلُوْا...... (Let them eat ...3) we can see that the making of eating and drinking the real occupation and aim of life, and keeping glued to long-drawn material plans while surrounded by countless things of worldly comfort, and becoming totally heedless to death, is something which can be done only by the disbelievers. The reason is that they do not believe in the 'Ākhirah, the life to come, and the accounting

of deeds there, and the reward and punishment for it. As for eating and drinking, a believer does it too, and takes care of economic needs to the measure of necessity, and makes future plans for occupation and business as well. But, a believer would not make all these efforts by forgetting death and ignoring the concern for 'Ākhirah. Therefore, he is careful about everything he does and finds out whether it is Ḥalāl or Ḥarām, permissible or forbidden. Then, he does not occupy himself in the making of wasteful or unnecessary plans and projections, as hobby or compulsion. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Four things are signs of being unfortunate: (1) Not being able to shed tears (that is, not being in tears when ashamed of acts of negligence and sin); (2) and hard-heartedness; (3) fanciful hopes and plans for the future; (4) and the greed for worldly things. (Qurṭubī from Musnad al-Bazzār from Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه)

And the expression: يُلْهِهِمُ الْأَمَلُ 'let (their) fancy make them neglectful' means the making of long-drawn plans with engrossing love, and the greed for the material without any concern for death and 'Ākhirah. (Qurṭubī) As for plans made to achieve religious objectives, or those made to guard the future interests of a people or country, they are not included here - because, that is a form of the concern for 'Ākhirah itself.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: The first set of people from this Ummah will have their salvation because of their perfect faith, and avoidance of the pursuit of the material (*dunyā*); and the later people of the Ummah will be destroyed because of miserliness, and fancies projected too far.

It has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Ad-Dardā' رضي الله عنه that he stood up on the Mimbar of Jami' Masjid of Damascus and said:

> 'O people of Damascus, would you listen to what this well-wishing brother of yours has to say? So, listen to me. There have been big people before you who made big money, collected gold and things, built magnificent palaces and made long-hauled plans and projections for the future. Today they are dust. Their residences are their graves. And all their long winded hopes and plans have proved to be no more than a web of deception. Close to you lived the people of 'Ād who had stuffed their country with their fighting men, wealth, means, possessions, arms and horses. Is there someone around who would be ready to buy what they left behind as their legacy for two silver *dirhams* from me?'

Imām Al-Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى said: A person with long plans, hopes and fancies is bound to ruin his proper conduct in life. (Al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 6 - 8

وَقَالُوا يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِىْ نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ اِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُوْنٌ ﴿٦﴾ لَوْمَا تَاْتِيْنَا بِالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾ مَا نُنَزِّلُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا كَانُوْٓا اِذًا مُّنْظَرِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾

And they said, "O you to whom the Dhikr (the Qur'ān) has been revealed, you are certainly insane. [6] **Why do you not bring the angels to us if you are among the truthful?"** [7] **We do not send down the angels except with what is true and then they shall be given no respite.** [8]

Explanatory Notes

1. The word: اَلْحَقّ (what is true) in: اِلاَّ بِالْحَقّ (*illā bi al-ḥaqq*: translated as 'except with what is true') means the decision to send down punishment. Some commentators take them to be denoting the Qur'ān, or prophethood. In Bayān al-Qur'ān, preferance has been given to the first meaning which has been reported from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has explained these verses as given below.

2. And these disbelievers (of Makkah) said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "O you to whom the Qur'ān has been revealed, (as you claim, then,) you are certainly (God forbid) insane (and your claim to prophethood is false, otherwise) why would you not bring the angels to us (who will testify your truthfulness before us - as in Sūrah Al-Furqān: 'لَوْ لاَ أُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُوْنَ مَعَهٗ نَذِيْرًا : 'Why is not an angel sent down unto him, to be a warner with him? [25:7] which is answered by Allah Ta'ālā:) We send down the angels (in the manner asked by them) only to enforce a decision (and had that been the case) then they would have been given no respite either (in fact, when they would have not believed even after their having come - as their ways guarantee - they would have been destroyed instantly, the reason for which has already appeared in the later verses of the first section of Sūrah Al-An'ām: 6:8,9).

Verse 9

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَحَٰفِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾

We, Ourselves, have sent down the Dhikr (the Qur'ān), and We are there to protect it. [9]

Commentary

An Episode from the Court of Ma'mūn

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has authentically reported an event from the court of 'Abbāsī Khalīfah, Al-Ma'mūn. He was used to patronizing occasional debates on intellectual issues at his court where all scholars were welcome. It so happened that a Jew came to attend one of these debates. By his looks, dress and manners, he seemed to be an elegant person. Then, his address during the debate was eloquent and intellectually bright. When the meeting was over, Ma'mūn called for him and asked him if he was an Israelite, which he confirmed. To test him, Ma'mūn asked him to become a Muslim in which case he could hope to have the best possible treatment from him.

He said that he was not willing to leave the religion of his forefathers which was his religion too. The matter ended there. That person went away. Then, after a year, the same person returned as a Muslim and made a very distinct contribution in the court meeting on the subject of Islamic jurisprudence. After the session was over, Ma'mūn called for him and asked him if he was the same person who had come last year. He said: Yes, I am. Ma'mūn asked: At that time you had refused to accept Islam. Tell me what made you accept Islam now.

He said: When I went back from here, I decided to do some research on contemporary religions. I am a scribe. I write books and sell them. They bring good price. This time I wanted to make a test. First, I calligraphed three manuscripts of the Torah in which I made some additions and deletions on my own. I took these manuscripts to the Synagogue. The Jews found them interesting and bought them. Then, I did the same things with the Injīl. I calligraphed three manuscripts, complete with my additions and deletions, and took them to the Church where the Christians were pleased with these manuscripts and bought them from me. After that, I tried the same thing with the Qur'ān. I calligraphed three good looking manuscripts of the Qur'ān, of course with the usual addi-

tions and deletions of my own. When I went out to sell them, I faced a problem. Every buyer I went to would take the manuscript, look into it to determine if it was correct or not, and when he would notice additions or deletions made into it, he would quietly return the manuscript back to me.

From this episode, I learnt my lesson that this Book is protected, and protected by Allah Ta'ālā Himself, therefore, I embraced Islam. Qāḍī Yaḥyā ibn Aktham, the narrator of this event says that, by chance, he had the *taufīq* of performing his Ḥajj in the same year. There he met Sufyān ibn 'Uyainah to whom he related this event. He said: Surely, this is how it should be because this is confirmed by the Qur'ān. Yaḥyā ibn Aktham asked about the *āyah* he had in mind. He said: When the glorious Qur'ān mentions the Torah and the Injīl, there it says: بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوا مِن كِتَٰبِ اللَّهِ (that is, the Jews and Christians have been entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the Torah and Injīl, the Books of Allah - 5:44). This is the reason why, when the Jews and Christians did not fulfill their duty of protecting them, these Books were lost through distortions and alterations. This is contrary to the case of the Holy Qur'ān about which Allah Ta'ālā has said: إِنَّا لَهُ لَحَٰفِظُونَ (And We are there to protect it - 9). Thus, when Allah Ta'ālā Himself arranged to have it remain protected, then, despite thousands of efforts made by enemies, not a single change in one tiny dot or case mark could be made. Today, over fourteen hundred years have passed since even the blessed age of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and there has been a shortfall and neglect on the part of Muslims in all areas of their religious matters, yet the continuous arrangement of memorizing the Holy Qur'ān all over the world stands firmly established as it was. In every period of time, there are millions of Muslims, old and young, male and female, always present on the scene, blessed people in whose hearts and minds the Holy Qur'ān lives protected. Before them, not even the highest of the high religious scholar can dare recite a single letter of the Qur'ān wrong, for there would be around at that time many, seniors or children, who would promptly apprehend the error.

The Promise to Protect the Qur'ān Includes the Protection of Ḥadīth

As a matter of principle, all learned people agree that the Qur'ān is neither the name of the words of the Qur'ān alone, nor that of its meanings alone, instead, a combination of both is called the Qur'ān. The rea-

son is that Qur'ānic meanings and subjects appear in other books as well, and as for Islamic writings, their subjects are essentially Qur'ānic, but they are not called Qur'ān - because, they are not the words of the Qur'ān. Similarly, if a person were to borrow different words and sentences from the Holy Qur'ān and write an article or treatise, no one will call this too by the name of Qur'ān, even though there is no word from outside the Qur'ān. This tells us that the Qur'ān is the exclusive name of the particular Divinely revealed Book the words and meanings of which are simultaneously protected.

This also leads us to the ruling that the practice of people who publish the translation of the Qur'ān only in a foreign language and give it the name, for example, an English Qur'ān or an Urdu Qur'ān, is not permissible at all - because, that is not the Qur'ān. And when we know that Qur'ān is not the name of the words of the Qur'ān alone, but that its meaning too are a part of it, then, the responsibility of protecting the Qur'ān taken upon Himself in this verse by Allah Taʿālā covers the total protection of the words of the Qur'ān as well as the meanings of the Qur'ān in that they remain protected against alteration or distortion.

And it is obvious that the meanings of the Qur'ān are the same as the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent to teach - as pointed out in the Qur'ān: لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَانُزِّلَ اِلَيْهِمْ (16:44). It means: 'You have been sent to explain the meaning of what has been revealed for them.' And this is what the verse: يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ : 'Teaches them the Book and the Wisdom' (3:164) also means. And that is why he said:

اِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ مُعَلِّمًا

'As for me, I have been sent as a teacher.'

Now, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent to explain the meanings of the Qur'ān and to impart education to people, then, he used a set of his sayings and doings as the medium of instruction for his community, and this very set of his words and deeds is known as the Ḥadīth.

One who says that the Aḥādīth of the Rasūl of Allah are not absolutely protected is really saying that the Qur'ān is not protected.

There are people around who would like to deceive the whole world by saying that the treasure of Aḥādīth present in authentic books is not

trustworthy because it has been documented much later than the blessed age of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. First of all, even this assumption of theirs is not correct because the process of protection and documentation of Aḥādīth had already started within the age of prophethood itself, though it was completed later. In addition to that, the Ḥadīth of the Rasūl of Allah is really the explanation of the Qur'ān and the meaning of the Qur'ān. Their protection is something which Allah Ta'ālā has taken upon Himself. Then, how can it be possible that only the words of the Qur'ān remain protected while the meanings of the Qur'ān (that is, the Aḥādīth of the Rasūl) go to waste?

Verses 10 - 15

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِىْ شِيَعِ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿۱۰﴾ وَمَا يَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ رَّسُوْلٍ
اِلَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ كَذٰلِكَ نَسْلُكُهٗ فِىْ قُلُوْبِ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ
﴿۱۲﴾ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ سُنَّةُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ وَلَوْ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ
بَابًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فَظَلُّوْا فِيْهِ يَعْرُجُوْنَ ﴿۱۴﴾ لَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَا سُكِّرَتْ
اَبْصَارُنَا بَلْ نَحْنُ قَوْمٌ مَّسْحُوْرُوْنَ ﴿۱۵﴾

And We did send the messengers before you among the groups of earlier peoples. [10] **And no messenger came to them but they used to mock at him.** [11] **This is how We make it enter into the hearts of the sinners,** [12] **(where-by) they do not believe in it (the Qur'ān). And this has been the way of earlier people.** [13] **And even if We were to open a gate in the sky and they keep ascending through it,** [14] **still they will say, "It is nothing but that our eyes have been deluded and that we are a people bewitched.** [15]

A Lexical Note of Explanation

The word: الشِّيَع in the first verse (10) is the plural form of: شيعه (*shī'ah*) which means the follower or helper of a person. Then, it is also used to denote a group which agrees upon particular beliefs and theoretical assumptions. So, the sense of the statement is that Allah Ta'ālā has sent messengers among every group or sect. Here, by using the word: فِى (*fī*) in: فِىْ شِيَعِ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ in place of اِلٰى : *ilā:* to (translated as 'among the groups of

earlier peoples'), the hint given is that the messenger for every group was sent from among that particular group so that people would find it easy to trust him, and that he too, by being aware of their taste and temperament, could make appropriate plans to work for their reform.

Verse 16

وَلَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا فِي السَّمَآءِ بُرُوجًا وَّزَيَّنّٰهَا لِلنّٰظِرِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

And We have created stellar formations in the sky and have beautified them for the onlookers. [16]

Sequence

Mentioned in the previous verses was the doggedness and hostility of deniers and disbelievers. In the present verse, and in those which follow immediately after, clear proofs of the Oneness, Knowledge and Power of Allah Ta'ālā have been given. Described alongside is what transpires before His creation between the heavens and the earth, a little deliberation in which on the part of a sensible person would make any denial impossible.

Commentary

The word: بُرُوجًا is the plural of: بُرج (*burj*) which is applied to big palaces and castles and to similar other structural entities. Tafsīr authorities Mujāhid, Qatādah, Abū Ṣāliḥ and others have explained '*burūj*' at this place in the sense of big stars. As for the statement in this verse which points to the creation of these big stars in the sky, the word: اَلسَّمَاء (*as-samā'*) or sky means atmosphere which, in common modern day terminology, is called the 'space.' The application of '*as-samā*'' in both these senses is common, and recognized. Thus, the physical presence of deep space is identified as '*as-samā*'' and the atmosphere much lower than it has also been repeatedly termed as '*as-samā*'' in the Holy Qur'ān. As for the planets and stars being in the space, and not in the skies, the relevant investigative details, as coordinated with the verses of the Qur'ān and classical and modern astronomy, will Inshallah appear under our comments on the verse: تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَ فِى السَّمَآءِ بُرُوجًا وَّجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَّقَمَرًا مُّنِيرًا (Blessed is He Who made in the sky stellar formations and made in it the Sun and the Moon providing light) of Sūrah Al-Furqān (25 :61).

Verses 17 - 18

وَحَفِظْنٰهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطٰنٍ رَّجِيْمٍ ﴿١٧﴾ اِلَّا مَنِ اسْتَرَقَ السَّمْعَ فَاَتْبَعَهٗ
شِهَابٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٨﴾

... and have protected them from every outcast satan, [17] **but the one who tries to eavesdrop is chased by a clearly visible flame.** [18]

Commentary

The Meteor

The first thing these verses prove is that the satans have no access to the heavens. That Shayṭān the accursed was in the heavens at the time of the creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and that he deceived 'Ādam and Ḥawwā (Eve) عليهما السلام were events which took place before they appeared on the earth. Upto that time, the entry of the Jinns and satans in the heavens was not prohibited. It was after the coming down of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and the expulsion of the Shayṭān that this entry was banned. From what has been said in Sūrah Al-Jinn: اِنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ فَمَنْ يَّسْتَمِعِ الْاٰنَ يَجِدْ لَهٗ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا (And we used to sit in ambush at places from it so as to eavesdrop. Whoever then tries to hear would find for him a flame in hot pursuit - 72:9), it appears that, before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the satans could overhear about things happening in the heaven through the mutual conversation of angels. This does not necessarily imply that that the satans used to hear about such information by entering into the heavens. The first sentence of the verse quoted above: نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ gives the sense that they would enter the atmospheric zone where clouds abound like thieves, would sit there in ambush and hear. These words themselves are indicative of no other possibility but that the entry of the Jinns and the satans had continued to be banned in the heavens - but, they would reach the outer atmosphere of the skies and hear a little by stealth. It was after the advent of the Prophet of Islam, peace and blessings be on him, that an additional arrangement was activated when the satans were stopped even from this covert eavesdropping through meteors or shooting stars (*Al-Shihāb Al-Thāqib*) which zoom in upon them from the outer space with enormous speed.

Now the question, as to how could the satans hear the conversation

of angels taking place inside the heavens while they were out of it, is not something just impossible. It is quite probable that the heavenly bodies not be prohibitive of the audition of sounds, and it is also not far out that the angels sometimes come lower down the heavens and engage themselves in some conversation hearing which the satans used to run. A Ḥadīth of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī confirms this very probability. She said that the angels sometimes come down as far as where the clouds are and talk about the heavenly happenings among themselves. It was in this atmospheric zone of the skies that the satans used to hide themselves in to hear this news. This furtive effort of theirs was stopped through Al-Shihāb Al-Thāqib, the shooting stars. Detailed comments on this subject will, Inshallah, appear in Sūrah Al-Jinn under our exegesis of the verse: أَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ (72:9).

Now, the second question we have here is that of Al-Shihāb Al-Thāqib, meteors or shooting stars, in these verses. According to the statements of the Holy Qur'ān, it appears that these '*shihābs*' or flames are formed to hit the satans in order that the revelation remains protected. In other words, the satans are driven away through them so that they would not overhear angels.

The difficult part of the question relates to the fact that the presence of shooting stars in outer space is nothing new. Falling stars were seen even before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ - and this phenomena continues later than that as well. If so, how can it be said that the shooting stars show up to drive the satans away, which is the particular feature of the age of the Holy Prophet ﷺ? Obviously, this seems to support the view of the scientists who say that meteors become so hot from rushing through the air that they glow and often burn up which gives onlookers the impression that a star has fallen. Therefore, in usage, this is identified as a falling star. The Arabic language itself has an expression: اِنقِضَاض الکوکب (*inqiḍāḍ al-kaukab*) which is a virtual synonym, of the falling of a star.

However, the answer is that there is no contradiction here. One or more scientific explanations for this phenomena could be possible, for example, vapours rising from the earth surface may heat up at some point, or the speed of the meteors makes them glow and burn, or a flame emits

from a star - and this may have habitually continued since ever. But, before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, these flames were not employed to serve a particular purpose. However, after his coming, meteoric flames were employed to serve the purpose of shooting the satans who would come up to stealthily hear the conversation of angels.

This is how 'Allāmah Al-'Ālūsī has interpreted it in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī. There he reports that someone asked Imām Ẓuhrī, the Ḥadīth authority, that stars used to fall even before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He said: "Yes." Thereupon, this person confronted him by quoting the verse cited above. Then he said: "The shooting stars, no doubt, did exist before - but, after the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, when the satans were dealt with sternly, these were employed to drive them away."

In a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, there is a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه which reports the saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself on this subject. According to this report, he was sitting with a group of his Ṣaḥābah when they saw a star falling. He asked them: What did you take the falling of a star to be during the days of Jāhiliyyah, that is, before Islam? They said: We took it to be a sign of some major upheaval in the world, or that a prominent man would die, or be born. He said: This is absurd. It has nothing to do with someone's death or birth. As for these flames, they are thrown to dispel the satans.

To sum up, it can be said that the view of scientists about the shooting stars is also not contrary to the Qur'ān, and it is also not too far out to state that these flames were made to fall directly from some stars. Whichever way it is taken, the purpose of the Qur'ān stands proved clearly.

Verses 19 - 25

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنٰهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
مَّوْزُونٍ ﴿١٩﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ وَمَنْ لَّسْتُمْ لَهُ بِرٰزِقِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾
وَإِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَآئِنُهُ وَمَا نُنَزِّلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ ﴿٢١﴾
وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيٰحَ لَوَاقِحَ فَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَأَسْقَيْنٰكُمُوهُ وَمَآ أَنْتُمْ

لَهٗ بِخٰزِنِيْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَاِنَّا لَنَحْنُ نُحْيٖ وَنُمِيْتُ وَنَحْنُ الْوٰرِثُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾
وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَقْدِمِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَاْخِرِيْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَاِنَّ
رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ ع

And We have spread out the earth and placed therein mountains, and caused to grow therein everything in balance, [19] **and created therein sustenance for you, and those for whom you are not the sustainers.** [20] **There is nothing but We have treasures of it. And We do not send it down but in a determined quantity.** [21]

And We sent forth winds, loaded then sent down water from the sky and gave it to you to drink, and you are not able to store it. [22]

And We, only We give life and bring death and We are the ultimate inheritor (of everything). [23]

And We know those of you who went ahead, and We know those who remained behind. [24] **And surely, your Lord will gather them together. Surely, He is All-Wise, All-Knowing.** [25]

Commentary

Divine Wisdom: Balanced Provision for Human Needs

One sense of the expression: مِنْ كُلِّ شَیْءٍ مَّوْزُوْنٍ (everything in balance - 19) is what has been taken in the present translation of the text, that is, it was in His infinite wisdom that He caused everything that grows to grow in a determined measure, not less than that which would have made life difficult, and not too much which would have also brought difficulties of a different nature. If grains like wheat and rice and the best of fruits around were to grow in such excess that stockpiles of them remain behind even after their liberal consumption by human beings and animals, then, it is obvious that they would go bad, or their possible storage (in ideal natural state) will be difficult under varying conditions, and if they had to be dumped, then, not much space will be left for such mega dumpings.

This tells us that it was also within the power of Allah Taʿālā that He would have caused grains and fruits on which human life depends to grow in such abundance that everyone would have them free everywhere

so much so that, despite their care-free use, stores upon stores of them would have kept lying around. But, this situation could have turned into a punishment for human beings, therefore, these were provided in a particular measure and balance so that their worth and value remains actively recognized, and that they are not left over only to go to waste either.

And this expression: مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَّوْزُوْنٍ (everything in balance) could also be taken in the sense that Allah Ta'ālā has created everything that grows in a suitable and proportionate manner which gives it beauty and attraction. Trees are different, so are their trunks, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. Different are their sizes, shapes, colours and tastes. What one readily sees is their happy balance and delightful looks. Everyone enjoys having them around. But, a full comprehension of the wisdom which has gone into their making is not possible for any human being.

Water Supply : The Unique Divine Arrangement

In verse 22, from: وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيَاحَ (And We send forth winds ...) to: 'مَآ أَنْتُمْ لَهُ بِخٰزِنِيْنَ (and you are not able to store it), a hint has been given to this wise arrangement through which a formidable system has been established to provide water for all human beings, animals, cattle, birds and beasts who live on this earth as and when they need it. Under this arrangement, everyone gets water everywhere, under all conditions, as needed, for drinking or bathing or washing or for irrigating farms and trees. This is water at no cost. As for those who would spend to dig a well or put water pipes to receive the supply of water, they only pay for the means and facilities. No one can pay for even a drop of water, nor has anyone been asked to pay for it.

Mentioned first in the verse was how Divine power has set in motion its unique system of delivering water from the sea all over the earth by creating vapours in the sea which generated the substance of rains (the monsoons) and on top of it fanned the winds which would transform it into clouds making them as if they were mountain-like planes laden with water. Then, comes the task of having these giant planes carrying their cargo of water reach every nook and corner of the world where it must reach. And then this mission is accomplished directly under Divine command whereby these gigantic autoplanes would rain down a specific quantity of water over a specific area of the earth, as commanded.

In this manner, water from the sea is home-delivered to all inhabitants of the earth, human beings, and animals, wherever they may be. Then, this system takes care of seeing that an equally unique change is made in the taste and properties of the water being delivered. We know that Allah Taʻālā has, in His wisdom, made sea water so salty and brackish that tons and tons of salt is extracted and used from it. The element of wisdom behind it is that this great sea sphere which is home to millions and billions of life forms, and their burial place too where they die and disintegrate. Then, foul water from all over the earth (despite much publicized ecological concerns voiced by the polluters themselves) ultimately gets delivered in it. Had this been sweet water, it would have gone bad within a day, and its stench would have been so severe that it would have become a health hazard for the dwellers on land. Therefore, nature made it so acidly brackish that it would just burn up the filth which keeps reaching it from all over the world. So, it was based on this wise consideration that the sea water was made salty, rather brackish, which cannot be drunk or used to quench thirst. Certainly great is the Divine system which not only made water planes designed as clouds to carry the priceless treasures of water, but did much more when it activated its own desalination without the help of huge mechanized plants used for this purpose in our time. It only took the period of time from the rising of the monsoons until the rains fell down on the earth that salt from sea water separated and sweet water was what we got. A reference to this appears in Sūrah Al-Mursalāt (77:27) where it is said: وَّاَسْقَيْنٰكُمْ مَّآءً فُرَاتًا It means: We gave you water to drink which quenches thirst. The word: فُرَات (*furāt*) used here signifies thirst-quenching sweet water. In other words, the sense is that Allah has made the salty water of the sea go through His own desalination plant in the clouds and has arranged for you to have sweet drinking water out of water which was brackish.

The same subject occurs in Sūrah Al-Wāqiʻah (56:68-70) where it is said:

اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ الْمَآءَ الَّذِىْ تَشْرَبُوْنَ ءَاَنْتُمْ اَنْزَلْتُمُوْهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْزِلُوْنَ ـ لَوْنَشَآءُ
جَعَلْنٰهُ اُجَاجًا فَلَوْ لَاتَشْكُرُوْنَ

You see the water you drink? Is it you who bring it down from the cloud, or are We the senders? If We had willed, We would have made it bitter. Why, then, would you not be grateful?

Upto this point, we have seen the spectacular manifestation of Divine power as to how it has picked up water from the sea, changed it into sweet water, and delivered it through clouds all over the world with such effeciency of management that it reached not only the human beings of every region but was also passed on to animals and wildlife which are not within the range of human inquiry. Water was, so to say, home-delivered to them - and free of cost too, in fact, they had to have it.

But, this arrangement does not solve the problem faced by human beings and animals because they need water every day, rather every moment. Therefore, one method of fulfilling their daily demand was to have rains come every day, twelve months a year. But, under this arrangement, their elemental need for water would have been taken care of to a certain degree, however, the disturbance they would have faced in other economic activities is not difficult to foresee, at least for those who have the experience. Constant rain, every day of the year, would have affected health and caused gridlocks in transportation, hazards in movement and sluggishness in business.

Also possible was a second method that there be enough rain in particular months of the year so that the water from it becomes sufficient for the rest of the months. But, this method would have required that everyone be assigned a quota of water which may be entrusted to each such person with the ground rule that they would keep the quota and share of water thus received under their personal custody.

Now, just imagine. If this was done, how could every human being have managed to assemble enough water containers of suitable sizes and capacities in which water needed for a period of three to six months could be stored? Even if, this could somehow be done, it goes without saying that this water would have gone bad within a few days drinking which, in fact, using which for some other purpose would have been out of the question. Therefore, Divine power introduced yet another unique system to preserve it and make it become available as and when and where needed. We see that some portion of the water rained down is immediately put to use when it helps farms and trees to bloom and human beings and animals to quench their thirst. Part of it gets deposited and preserved in open ponds and lakes. Then a greater portion of it is transformed into ice - a frozen sea - which is so conveniently put atop moun-

tain peaks. Neither dust, nor filth can touch it. Had this water remained in the liquid form, there would have been the danger of its being contaminated with dust or filth brought by the winds. May be birds and animals would have fallen into it, and died, which would have spoiled this water. But, what Divine power did was to take this treasure of water, turn it into a virtual sea of ice, and put it on top of the mountains from where it keeps seeping into the pores of the mountains and then becomes what streams are and thus it reaches everywhere. Places where there are no streams either, water keeps flowing under the earth surface like human veins in every region of the world. Dig a well, it would come out.

To sum up, this Divine system of water supply holds thousands of blessings in its fold. First of all, the creation of water is in itself a great blessing. Then, making it reach all regions of the earth is the second blessing. Then, making it potable is the third blessing. Then, giving human beings the opportunity to drink it is the fourth blessing. Then, the formidable system of collecting and preserving water according to its need is the fifth blessing. And then, giving men and women of this world the ability to benefit by it is the sixth blessing - because, despite water being available, there may be unwelcome circumstances or natural and man-made calamities due to which one may not remain capable enough to drink water. In the present verse of the Holy Qur'ān: فَاَسْقَيْنٰكُمُوْهُ وَمَآ اَنْتُمْ لَهٗ بِخٰزِنِيْنَ (and gave it to you to drink, and you are not able to store it - 22), a clear hint has been given to these blessings, and also a warning (to those who refuse to see truth as it is):

فَتَبَارَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِيْنَ

Blessed is Allah, the best of creators.

Going Ahead and Remaining Behind in Righteous Deeds : The Difference in Degrees

Some exegetic interpretations of the words: اَلْمُسْتَقْدِمِيْنَ (*al-mustaqdimīn*) : 'those who go ahead' and: اَلْمُسْتَاْخِرِيْنَ (*al-musta'khirīn*) : 'those who remain behind' appearing in verse 24: وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَقْدِمِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَاْخِرِيْنَ have been variously reported from Tafsīr authorities among the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn. These are:

1. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' are those born to date, and 'Al-Musta'khirīn' are those not born yet [Qatādah and 'Ikrimah].

2. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' means the dead, and 'Al-Musta'khirīn' means those alive till now [Ibn 'Abbās and Ḍaḥḥāk]

3. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' signifies good people who came before the appearance of the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and 'Al-Mustakhirīn' refers to his Ummah itself [Mujāhid].

4. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' denotes people who obey Allah and do good deeds while 'Al-Musta'khirīn' refers to people who disobey Him and neglect what is good [Ḥasan and Qatādah]

5. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' are people who remain ahead in the rows of Ṣalāh, or in the front lines of Jihād, and in other righteous deeds - and 'Al-Musta'khirīn' are those who remain behind in these deeds of merit, stay in the rear rows and are used to being late [which is the Tafsīr given by leading authorities Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Sa'id ibn al-Musaiyyab, al-Qurṭubī, al-Sha'bī and others]

It is obvious that there is no distinct conflict or contradiction in these sayings, in the real sense. They can be accomodated all in one because the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā covers all kinds of people 'who go ahead' or 'remain behind.'

In his Tafsīr, Al-Qurṭubī has said that this verse indicates the merit of performing Ṣalāh in the first row, and soon after the time it becomes due. This is in accordance with the Ḥadīth where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: If people were to find out the enormous merit of calling the Adhān and standing in the first row of Ṣalāh, everyone would have started making the effort to necessarily stand in the first row, and when there would remain no space for everybody to stand there, lots would have to be drawn.

With this, Al-Qurṭubī has also reported the saying of Sayyidnā Ka'b رضي الله عنه : 'There are some people in this Ummah who, when they put their forehead on the ground for their Sajdah, forgiveness is granted to all those who are praying behind them.' Therefore, Sayyidnā Ka'b رضي الله عنه liked to be in the last row in the hope that 'perhaps, there may be in the front rows, some servant of Allah of the class, because of whose *barakah* (blissful presence), I may be forgiven.'

What is apparent here is that real merit does lie in praying in the

first row - as stands proved from the clear statements of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. But, a person who does not, for some reason, find a place in the first row, then, he too will have a sort of merit in that there may perhaps be some righteous servant of Allah praying in the front rows for whose sake, he too may be forgiven. And the way praying in the first row of Ṣalāh stands proved from this verse, also proved is the superiority of being in the front lines of Jihād.

Verses 26 - 44

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَاٍ مَّسْنُوْنٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَالْجَآنَّ
خَلَقْنٰهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَّارِ السَّمُوْمِ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَاِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّىْ
خَالِقٌۢ بَشَرًا مِّنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَاٍ مَّسْنُوْنٍ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَاِذَا سَوَّيْتُهٗ
وَنَفَخْتُ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِىْ فَقَعُوْا لَهٗ سٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَسَجَدَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ
كُلُّهُمْ اَجْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ اَبٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ مَعَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾
قَالَ يٰٓاِبْلِيْسُ مَا لَكَ اَلَّا تَكُوْنَ مَعَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ لَمْ اَكُنْ
لِّاَسْجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ خَلَقْتَهٗ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَاٍ مَّسْنُوْنٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ قَالَ
فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَاِنَّكَ رَجِيْمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَّاِنَّ عَلَيْكَ اللَّعْنَةَ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ
﴿٣٥﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ فَاَنْظِرْنِىْٓ اِلٰى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ قَالَ فَاِنَّكَ مِنَ
الْمُنْظَرِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُوْمِ ﴿٣٨﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَآ اَغْوَيْتَنِىْ
لَاُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَاُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ اِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ
الْمُخْلَصِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ قَالَ هٰذَا صِرَاطٌ عَلَىَّ مُسْتَقِيْمٌ ﴿٤١﴾ اِنَّ عِبَادِىْ
لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنٌ اِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغٰوِيْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَاِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ
لَمَوْعِدُهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ لَهَا سَبْعَةُ اَبْوَابٍ ؕ لِكُلِّ بَابٍ مِّنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ
مَّقْسُوْمٌ ﴿٤٤﴾

And We created man from a sound-giving clay made of decayed mud. [26] **And "the Jānn" (the first Jinn) We had**

created earlier from the fire of the hot wind. [27] **And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to create a human being from a sound-giving clay made of decayed mud.** [28] **And when I form him perfect and blow in him of My spirit, you fall down before him, prostrating."** [29] **So the angels prostrated, all together,** [30] **except Iblīs. He refused to be among those who prostrated.** [31] **He (Allah) said, "O Iblīs, what is wrong with you that you did not join those who prostrated?"** [32] **He said, "I am not the one to prostrate before a human being whom You have created from a sound-giving clay made of decayed mud."** [33] **He said, "Then, get out from here for you are an outcast.** [34] **And upon you is the curse upto the day of Judgement."** [35] **He said, "O my Lord, then give me respite upto the day they (the dead) shall be raised."** [36] **He (Allah) said, "Well, you are among those given respite** [37] **till the day of the appointed time."** [38] **He said, "My Lord, since You made me go astray, I swear I shall adorn for them (evils) on the earth and shall lead all of them astray,** [39] **except those of Your servants from among them who are chosen (by You)."** [40] **He (Allah) said, "To Me, it is the straight path.** [41] **My servants are such that you have no power over them except those who follow you from the deviators.** [42] **And the Jahannam (Hell) is the promised place for them all.** [43] **It has seven gates. For each gate there is a group apportioned from them."** [44]

Commentary

Blowing of Spirit into the Human Body and Making Angels Prostrate to him : A Brief Review

Is the spirit (*Rūḥ*) a physical entity, or pure essence? On this subject, there has been a difference of opinion among the learned since a long time. According to Ash-Shaykh 'Abd Al-Raūf Al-Munāwī, there are upto a thousand positions taken by them. But, they are all based on conjectures. None of them can be called certain. Imām Al-Ghazālī, Imām Rāzī and mystic scholars and thinkers maintain that it is no physical entity. It is pure essence. Imām Rāzī has advanced twelve arguments in support of this view.

But, the majority of the 'Ulamā' of the Muslim Ummah declare Rūḥ (spirit, soul) to be a highly refined physical entity. The word: نفخ (*nafkh*) means to blow, to breathe into. If we were to go by the consensus of the

majority of 'Ulamā' and take Rūḥ to be a refined physical entity, then breathing into it becomes evident by itself. And if we were to accept it to be pure essence, then breathing into it would mean establishing its connection to the body. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Rūḥ (spirit) and *Nafs* (self) : The View of Qāḍī Thanā'ullah رحمه الله تعالى

Leaving this long-winding debate aside, we consider it sufficient to refer the reader to a special research presented by Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Panīpatī رحمه الله تعالى in his Tafsīr Maẓharī.

The respected commentator says that Rūḥ has two kinds: (1) Higher (*'Ulwī*) and (2) Lower (*Siflī*). The higher Rūḥ is bereft of matter and is a creation of Allah Ta'ālā the comprehension of whose reality is difficult. The masters of insight by illumination (*ahl al-kashf*) see its real station to be above the Throne (*'Arsh*) because it is more refined than the 'Arsh. And this higher Rūḥ, as seen through illumination, is sensed in five degrees at upper and lower levels. Their number is five and they are: (1) The heart (*Qalb*) (2) The spirit (*Rūḥ*) (3) The mystery (*Sirr*) (4) The secret (*Khafii*) (5) The most secret (*Akhfā*). These are all from the refinements of the domain of Divine command towards which the Holy Qur'ān has hinted by declaring: قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي (Say, "The spirit is from the command of my Lord - 17:85).

As for the lower Rūḥ, it is a refined vapour which emerges from the combination of the four elements of the human body, that is, from fire, water, dust and air, and this lower Rūḥ is called the self (*nafs*).

Allah Ta'ālā has made this lower spirit called self a mirror of the higher spirits mentioned above. An illustration would make it clear. If we were to hold a mirror against the sun, then, despite that the sun is far far away, its reflection comes into the mirror. And because of the light, that too starts glowing like the sun. It even receives the heat of the sun in it which could burn a piece of cloth. The same thing applies to the higher spirits. Though they are, because of their purity and detachment, very high and elevated in station, and far distant too, yet their reflection appears in the mirror of the lower spirit and transfers the states and effects of the higher spirits into it. When these very effects take root in human selves, they become known as subordinate parts of each individual's spirit.

Then, this lower form of spirit which is identified as Nafs or self armed with the states and effects which it has acquired from the higher forms of spirits first gets connected with the heart muscle of the human body. This connection itself is another name for life. Once the lower spirit relates to the human heart, it infuses in it life and congnitions which it has acquired from the higher spirits. This lower spirit then starts circulating through the thin veins spread throughout the body and thus reaches every part of it.

It is this infusion of the lower spirit into the human body which has been called the 'blowing or breathing of the spirit' (نفخ الروح : the *nafkh* of *rūḥ*) because it bears close resemblance to blowing or breathing into something.

And, in the present verse, Allah Ta'ālā has attributed the spirit to Himself. He has said: 'مِن رُّوحِي' (from My spirit) so that the superior status of the human spirit out of the entire creation becomes evident - because, it has come into existence, without any material substance, only under Divine command. In addition to that, it has a unique ability to accept and absorb the manifestations of Divine light, an ability which does not exist in the spirit of any other living creature other than that of the human person.

Though, dust is the dominant element in the creation of man - and that is why the creation of man has been attributed to clay - but, the reality is that man is a combination of ten elements out of which five belong to the universe of creation (عالم الخلق) while the other five to the universe of Divine command (عالم الأمر). The four elements of the universe of creation are fire, water, dust and air. The fifth is the refined vapour from these four which is called the lower spirit or *nafs*. As for the five elements of the universe of Divine command mentioned above, they are: (1) heart (*qalb*) (2) spirit (*rūḥ*) (3) mystery (*sirr*) (4) secret (*khafiyy*) (5) totally hidden (*akhfa*).

It is because of this comprehensive making of the human model that man became deserving of Divine vice-regency, and very much capable of absorbing the light which helps him know his Lord and, of course, sustaining his own burning quest on the path of love and longing for Him. The outcome, though unspecified as to its actual state, is communion

with the Divine because the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: ' اَلْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ اَحَبَّ ' (One shall be with whoever one loves).

And since human beings have the ability to absorb the manifestations of Divine light, and since they have been given the honour of being in communion with the Divine, it came to be the dictate of Divine wisdom that man be made the object of prostration by the angels. It was said: 'فَقَعُوْا لَهٗ سٰجِدِيْنَ' (you fall down before him, prostrating - 29)

The Command to Prostrate was Given to Angels - Iblīs was to Follow Suit

Addressing Iblīs in Sūrah Al-A'rāf, it was said: مَامَنَعَكَ اَلاَّ تَسْجُدَ اِذْ اَمَرْتُكَ (What stopped you from prostrating when I ordered you? - 7:12). This shows that the command to prostrate was given, alongwith the angels, to Iblīs as well. However, the verses you have gone through a little earlier apparently give the sense that the command was particular to the angels. This could mean that the command was originally given to the angels but, as Iblīs too was present among the angels, therefore, he too was covered by this command as a corollary - because, when the command went forth for the most august creation of Allah Ta'ālā, that is, the angels, that they pay their homage to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام, it was obvious that any other creation was bound to follow suit under this command. It was for this reason that Iblīs did not respond by saying that he was never asked to prostrate to begin with, so he could not be charged with the crime of non-compliance of the order. Perhaps, the words of the Qur'ān here: ' اَبٰىٓ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ مَعَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ ' (He refused to be among those who prostrated - 30) may contain a hint in that direction. Rather than say: اَبٰىٓ اَنْ يَّسْجُدَ that is, 'he refused to prostrate', what was actually said was: ' اَبٰىٓ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ مَعَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ ' he refused to be among those who prostrated. This indicates that the main prostraters were after all the angels but Iblīs too, being present with them, was reason-bound to join the prostrating angels. So, the Divine wrath was against his failure to join.

The Meaning of Shayṭān Having No Power over Special Servants of Allah

From the verse: اِنَّ عِبَادِىْ لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنٌ (My servants are such that you have no power over them - 42), we learn that there are special and chosen servants of Allah Ta'ālā who are not affected by Satanic deception. But, within this event relating to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام, it has also been

said that the deception of Satan worked in the case of Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Ḥawwā'. Similarly, about the noble Companions, the Qur'ān has said: إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوْا (Satan had but made them slip for some of their deeds - 3:155) which tells us that there was an occasion (during the Battle of Uḥud) when the evil plan of the Satan worked against the Companions as well.

Therefore, in the present verse, the sense of saying that the special servants of Allah are such that Satan has no power over them is that their hearts and minds never come under the power and sway of Satan to the extent that would just not become alerted to their error at all, because of which, they would remain deprived of necessary repentance for ever, or that they fall into some sin the forgiveness of which would become impossible.

As for the events mentioned above, they offer no contradiction because 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' عليهما السلام made their Taubah and this repentance was accepted. Similarly, the noble Companions referred to above had also made their Taubah. Thus, whatever sin they fell into because of the mechanization of Satan was forgiven.

The Seven Gates of Jahannam

About the statement: لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ (It has seven gates - 44), according to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ reported by Imām Aḥmad, Ibn Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī and Al-Baihaqī, the seven gates of Jahannam (Hell) are in terms of seven levels, one upon the other. Some others have taken these as common gates where every gate will be reserved for a special kind of sinners. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 45 - 50

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّعُيُوْنٍ ﴿٤٥﴾ اُدْخُلُوْهَا بِسَلٰمٍ اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾
وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ اِخْوَانًا عَلٰى سُرُرٍ مُّتَقٰبِلِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾
لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيْهَا نَصَبٌ وَّمَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِيْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ نَبِّئْ عِبَادِيْٓ اَنِّيْٓ
اَنَا الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَاَنَّ عَذَابِيْ هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْاَلِيْمُ ﴿٥٠﴾

Surely, the God-fearing are in Gardens and streams: [45]

"Enter here in peace, free of fear." [46] **And We shall have removed whatever grudge they had in their hearts (making them) brothers, sitting on couches, face to face.** [47] **No weariness shall touch them nor will they be expelled from there.** [48]

Tell My servants that I am the Most-Forgiving, the Very-Merciful [49] **and that My punishment is the painful punishment.** [50]

Commentary

According to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ, when the people of Jannah will enter Jannah, first of all two streams of water will be presented before them. They will drink water from the first stream and all mutual grudges they had from their life in the mortal world - the effect of which naturally survived right through the end - will be totally washed away. In its place, they all will feel love for each other in their hearts because mutual bickering too is virtually a pain and punishment as such, and Jannah is free of all pain.

As for the report appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth: 'Anyone who nurses the least grudge in his heart against a Muslim will not go to Jannah,' it means the grudge and malice which is rooted in material ends, and is there by one's personal intention and choice, and because of which this person keeps looking for an opportunity to inflict pain or loss on his enemy. Being ill at ease in someone's company as a matter of natural temperament, a human trait beyond one's control, is not included here. Similar is the case of what is based on some Islamic legal ground. It is this kind of grudge which has been referred to in this verse and where it has been said that such grudge and temperamental distaste will be removed from their hearts.

It is about this kind of grudge that Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ said: "I hope that I shall be, alongwith Ṭalḥa and Zubayr, among those the dust of mutual anxiety from whose hearts will be removed while entering Jannah." The reference here is to the difference of opinion and resulting conflict which took place between Sayyidnā Ṭalḥa ؓ and Sayyidnā Zubayr ؓ and Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ.

From verse 48: لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَّمَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ (No weariness shall touch them therein nor will they be expelled from there), we learn about

two features of Jannah: (1) No one shall ever feel tired or weak. This is contrary to what happens in our mortal world where hard work naturally results in fatigue. In fact, even a state of total rest and fun would sometimes tire a person out, no matter how enjoyable are things one is occupied with.

(2) The other feature of Jannah we discover is that the blessings once received there shall be eternal. These blessings shall never diminish nor shall anyone be expelled from there. In Sūrah Ṣad, it was said: إِنَّ هٰذَا لَرِزْقُنَا مَا لَهُ مِنْ نَّفَادٍ (This is sustenance provided by Us which is never to exhaust - 38:54). And in the present verse, it was said: وَمَا هُمْ مِّنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِيْنَ (nor will they be expelled from there) that is, they shall never be deprived of the state of bliss bestowed upon them. This is contrary to the affairs of the mortal world where the recepient of the best of conveniences lives under the apprehension that the giver of the facilities may become displeased with him one of those days and expel him out.

As for the third probability, that the blessings of Jannah may remain everlasting, nor one is expelled from there, but one may himself get bored by living there and wish to go out, the Qur'ān has demolished this probability in one sentence of Sūrah Al-Kahf with the following words: لَا يَبْغُوْنَ عَنْهَا حِوَلاً (That is, these people too would never seek to return from there - 18:108).

Verses 51 - 77

وَنَبِّئْهُمْ عَنْ ضَيْفِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ ﴿٥١﴾ اِذْ دَخَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوْا سَلٰمًا ؕ قَالَ اِنَّا
مِنْكُمْ وَجِلُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ قَالُوْا لَا تَوْجَلْ اِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلٰمٍ عَلِيْمٍ ﴿٥٣﴾ قَالَ
اَبَشَّرْتُمُوْنِيْ عَلٰۤى اَنْ مَّسَّنِيَ الْكِبَرُ فَبِمَ تُبَشِّرُوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ قَالُوْا بَشَّرْنٰكَ
بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِّنَ الْقٰنِطِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ وَمَنْ يَّقْنَطُ مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ رَبِّهٖۤ اِلَّا
الضَّآلُّوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ اَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّاۤ
اُرْسِلْنَاۤ اِلٰى قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ اِلَّاۤ اٰلَ لُوْطٍ ؕ اِنَّا لَمُنَجُّوْهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ
﴿٥٩﴾ اِلَّا امْرَاَتَهٗ قَدَّرْنَاۤ ۙ اِنَّهَا لَمِنَ الْغٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ ع فَلَمَّا جَآءَ اٰلَ لُوْطِ

الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ اِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّنْكَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالُوْا بَلْ جِئْنٰكَ بِمَا
كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَمْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَاَتَيْنٰكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَاِنَّا لَصٰدِقُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَاَسْرِ
بِاَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ الَّيْلِ وَاتَّبِعْ اَدْبَارَهُمْ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ اَحَدٌ وَّامْضُوْا
حَيْثُ تُؤْمَرُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَقَضَيْنَآ اِلَيْهِ ذٰلِكَ الْاَمْرَ اَنَّ دَابِرَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ مَقْطُوْعٌ
مُّصْبِحِيْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَجَآءَ اَهْلُ الْمَدِيْنَةِ يَسْتَبْشِرُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قَالَ اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ
ضَيْفِيْ فَلَا تَفْضَحُوْنِ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُخْزُوْنِ ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالُوْٓا اَوَلَمْ
نَنْهَكَ عَنِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ بَنٰتِيْٓ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فٰعِلِيْنَ ﴿٧١﴾
لَعَمْرُكَ اِنَّهُمْ لَفِيْ سَكْرَتِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ
مُشْرِقِيْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ فَجَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّنْ
سِجِّيْلٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَاِنَّهَا لَبِسَبِيْلٍ
مُّقِيْمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾

And tell them about the guests of Ibrāhīm. [51] **When they visited him, they greeted him with Salām (peace on you). He said, "We are scared of you."** [52] **They said, "Do not be scared. We give you good news of a boy who will be knowledgeable."** [53] **He said, "Do you give me the good news while old age has befallen me? So what is the good news you are giving to me?"** [54] **They said, "We have given to you the good news of a fact. So do not be among those who lose hope."** [55] **He said, "Who would lose hope in the mercy of his Lord except those who have lost the straight path?"** [56] **He said, "Then, what is your mission, O messengers?"** [57] **They said, "We have been sent to a sinful people,** [58] **except the family of Lūṭ - all of whom we shall save,** [59] **but his wife. We have ordained that she is to be among those who will remain behind."** [60]

So when the messengers came to the family of Lūṭ, [61] **he said, "you are an unusual people."** [62] **They said, "No, but we have brought to you what they have been doubting in.** [63] **And we have come to you with a definite matter and surely we are truthful.** [64] **So, carry your family**

after a part of the night (has passed) and follow them at the rear and no one from you should look back and keep going to where you are commanded." [65] **And We revealed to him the fact that they are to be annihilated to the last man when they see the morning.** [66]

And the people of the city came rejoicing. [67] **He (Lūṭ) said, "They are my guests; so do not put me to shame** [68] **and fear Allah and do not disgrace me."** [69] **They said, "Had we not forbidden you from (being the guardian of) the whole world?"** [70] **He said, "These are my daughters, (for marriage) if you are to do so."** [71]

By your life, (O prophet) they are wandering blindly in their intoxication (misguidance). [72] **So, they were seized by the Cry at sunrise.** [73] **Then, We turned it (the city) upside down and sent over them rain of stones made of clay.** [74]

Surely, in that there are signs for those who read signs. [75] **And surely, it (their city) is located on the straight road.** [76] **Surely, in it there are signs for the believers.** [77]

Commentary

A Great Honour for the Holy Prophet ﷺ

About the word of Allah: لَعَمْرُكَ (*la'amruk* : By your life), the majority of commentators, as reported in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, have said that the addressee of *'la'amruka'* is the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is his life that Allah Ta'ālā has sworn by. Al-Baihaqī in Dalā'ilun-Nubūwwah, and Abū Nu'aym, Ibn Marduwayh and others have reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that Allah Ta'ālā has not bestowed on anyone in the whole creation an honour and rank higher than that of Sayyidnā Muhammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. This is the reason why Allah Ta'ālā has never sworn by the life of any prophet or angel, while in this verse, He has sworn by the age and life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ - which is the highest conceivable honour and deference accorded to him.

Swearing by Non-Allah

To swear by anyone or anything, other than the names and attributes of Allah Ta'ālā, is not permissible for any human being because one would only swear by whoever is held in the highest of esteem - and, as obvious, Allah alone can be the highest.

According to Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Do not swear by your mothers, fathers and idols. And do not swear by anyone except Allah - and if you have to swear by Allah, do it only when you are truthful in your statement. (Reported by Abū Dāwūd and An-Nasā'ī from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ)

It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥayn (the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim) that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once saw Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ swearing by his father. He called out to him and said: 'Watch out! Allah Ta'ālā forbids swearing by fathers. Whoever has to take an oath, let him do it in the name of Allah, otherwise, let him be silent. (Al-Qurṭubī under the commentary on Sūrah al-Mā'idah)

But, this injunction applies to Allah's creation in general. As for Allah Ta'ālā Himelf, He swears by different things He has created. This is particular to Him. Its purpose is to state the sublimity and beneficence of something from the desired angle. Then, the cause of forbidding common people from swearing by anyone other than Allah is not present here - because, in the Word of Allah there is no probability that He would take someone from His creation to be the highest and the best. Again, the reason is that absolute greatness is particular only with Allah Ta'ālā.

Learn Your Essential Lesson From Sites Ruined by Divine Punishment

In verses 75 and 76: إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَإِنَّهَا لَبِسَبِيلٍ مُّقِيمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ (Surely, in that there are signs for those who read signs. And surely, it [their city] is located on the straight road), Allah Ta'ālā has pointed out to the geographical location of such ruined cities which fall on the main road which takes people from Arabia to Syria. Also said with it was that in them there are great signs of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā for those who believe and have the necessary hindsight and foresight.

About this, there is another statement in Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ where it was said: لَمْ تُسْكَن مِّن بَعْدِهِمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (not lived in after them except a little - 28:58). In other words, after their destruction by Divine punishment, these habitations were not repopulated except some. So, by combining these indicators, we can see that Allah Ta'ālā has made these ruined habitations and homes a site from which coming generations could learn

their essential lesson.

This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ, whenever he has passed by these sites, went through a particular emotional state under which he would be overwhelmed by the awe of Almighty Allah and which caused his blessed head to lower down and he would then try to make his mount hasten through these sites. This particular mode of action taken by the Holy Prophet ﷺ has established the *sunnah* that making sites which have been hit by Divine punishment a place of picnic and amusement is hard-heartedness at its ugliest. Rather than do something like that, the only method of learning a lesson from them is to think about and feel the very presence of the most perfect power of Allah Taʻālā on the site being visited which should cause one to tremble with the fear of His punishment.

The habitations of the time of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام which were overturned are located, as said by the Qur'ān, on the Arabia-Syria route. This site is still present in the proximity of Jordan in the form of a wilderness below the sea level. On a major portion, flows a particular kind of water like a river. Sea life cannot survive here. Therefore, it is called the Dead Sea or the Sea of Lūṭ.

The local Department of Archaeology has set up some hotels and residential quarters at this site to attract tourists. The result is that people with an incorrigible infatuation with the material and who are equally dismissive of the concerns of the Hereafter have made this site a place of fun and frolic. People go there to enjoy the sights of the ancient. Lest such heedlessness becomes a habit, the Holy Qur'ān has served a warning towards the end by saying: إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (Surely, in it there are signs for the believers). It means: In reality, these sites and the events associated with them are full of moral lessons for everyone having insight. But, it is the good fortune of believers only who would benefit by learning what these sites teach, while others would go through these sites as tourists and leave empty-handed.

Verses 78 - 86

وَإِن كَانَ أَصْحَٰبُ الْأَيْكَةِ لَظَٰلِمِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَانتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ ۘ وَإِنَّهُمَا

لَبِاِمَامٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ اَصْحٰبُ الْحِجْرِ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾
وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ اٰيٰتِنَا فَكَانُوْا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِيْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَكَانُوْا يَنْحِتُوْنَ مِنَ
الْجِبَالِ بُيُوْتًا اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُصْبِحِيْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ فَمَآ
اَغْنٰى عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ
وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَآ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَاِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَاٰتِيَةٌ فَاصْفَحِ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيْلَ
﴿٨٥﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْخَلّٰقُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٨٦﴾

And, indeed, the people of Aikah were transgressors. [78] **So, We punished them in retribution and both of them are (situated) by a highway, clearly visible.** [79]

And the people of Al-Ḥijr did belie the messengers. [80] **And We provided them with Our signs yet they kept turning away from them.** [81] **They would hew out houses from the hills, in peace.** [82] **Then, the Cry seized them by the morning.** [83] **So, whatever they earned did not come to their help.** [84]

And We did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is there in between them but with truth. And the Hour is sure to come. Therefore, overlook in a gracious manner. [85] **Surely, your Lord is the Master - Creator, the All-Knowing.** [86]

Commentary

Aikah means a dense forest. There are other views too. Some commentators say that there was a dense forest near Madyan, therefore, Aikah is actually the title of the people of Madyan. Others have said that the people of Aikah and the people of Madyan were two different people. It was after the destruction of one of them that Sayyidnā Shu'ayb عليه السلام was sent to the other.

In Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, the following *marfū' ḥadīth* appears with reference to Ibn 'Asākir:

اِنَّ مَدْيَنَ وَاَصْحَابَ الْاَيْكَةِ اُمَّتَانِ بَعَثَ اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى اِلَيْهِمَا شُعَيْبًا

Madyan and the people of Aikah are two peoples. Allah Ta'ālā sent Shu'ayb to them.

And Al-Ḥijr is a valley situated in between Ḥijāz and Syria. It was inhabited by the people of Thamūd.

A Brief Explanation

Described at the beginning of the Sūrah was the hostility of the disbelievers of Makkah against the Holy Prophet ﷺ which also carried words of comfort for him briefly. Now, at the end of the Sūrah, more words of comfort appear to mollify his concern about their grudge and hostility.

Here, he is being asked not to grieve over their hostile opposition because there is a day when all scores will be settled, and that is the day of Judgement, and it is bound to come as he has been told. Then, there is the fact that Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is there in between them but with truth and wisdom. The wise consideration behind this creation is that people should believe in the existence of the maker of the universe, attest to His Oneness and supremacy and obey His injunctions. Also present there is the consequence of not doing so, after the argument of Allah stands established, that the defaulter be punished. Since this promised punishment does not seem to come in full right here in this mortal world, it has to be somewhere else. For that, the time is fixed, the time of the Qiyāmah, the day of Judgement. And this Hour is sure to come. Everyone will be taken care of there.

This being the wise arrangement of things, let him not grieve. The better course for him is to overlook their wicked behaviour in a gracious manner, that is, neither pay attention to their behavior nor complain about it. The reason is that his Lord is great as Creator and great as the Master Knower as well. He knows his patience and fortitude and He knows the evil mechanizations of his enemies too. Therefore, He is to exact the full return from them of what they have been doing.

Verses 87 - 99

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ ﴿٨٧﴾ لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ
إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ
لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾ وَقُلْ إِنِّي أَنَا النَّذِيرُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٨٩﴾ كَمَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَى
الْمُقْتَسِمِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾ الَّذِينَ جَعَلُوا الْقُرْآنَ عِضِينَ ﴿٩١﴾ فَوَرَبِّكَ

لَنَسْـَٔلَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ
وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ إِنَّا كَفَيْنَاكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِءِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾ الَّذِينَ
يَجْعَلُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَٰهًا آخَرَ ۚ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ
يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ
السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾ وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ ﴿٩٩﴾

And We have given you the seven oft-repeated verses and the glorious Qur'ān. [87] **Never stretch your eyes towards what We have given to groups of them to enjoy and do not grieve for them, and be kind to believers in humbleness.** [88] **And say, "I am the one who warns clearly (against punishment)** [89] **as We sent down upon the schismatics** [90] **who split the Qur'ān into bits.** [91] **So, by your Lord, We shall question them all,** [92] **about what they have been doing.** [93]

Now, proclaim what you are commanded to and turn away from the *mushriks* (polytheists). [94] **Surely, We are sufficient for you against those who deride,** [95] **those who take to another god alongwith Allah. So, they shall soon learn.** [96] **And We know that your heart feels distressed for what they say.** [97] **So, proclaim the purity, and glory of your Lord and be among those who prostrate.** [98] **And worship your Lord until comes to you that which is certain.** [99]

Commentary

Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah is the Text and Summary of the Whole Qur'ān

That Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah (The Opening) has been called the Glorious Qur'ān in this verse (87) indicates that Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah is, in a way, the whole Qur'ān - because the basic principles of Islām have been merged in it.[1]

1. In order to understand this, one must keep in mind that the words: السبع المثانى والقرآن العظيم (the seven oft-repeated verses and the glorious Qur'ān) in verse (87) are interpreted by the commentators in different ways. Most of them are of the view that 'seven oft-repeated verses' refer to Sūrah al-Fātiḥah which consists of seven verses. Since these seven verses are repeated in every *Ṣalāh*, they have been referred to in the verse 87 as 'oft-repeated verses'. Then, the words 'and the glorious Qur'ān' occuring after it are of explanatory nature which refer to the same 'seven oft-repeated verses'. Therefore, the name of the 'glorious Qur'ān' has been given here to the Sūrah al-Fātiḥah itself. The comment of the author is based on this interpretation.

On Being Questioned in Al-Maḥshar : About what will it be?

In verse 92, swearing by His Own sacred Being, Allah Taʿālā has declared that all such people who came earlier or later shall definitely be questioned.

The Ṣaḥābah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ as to what it will be about. He said that it will be about saying: لا اله الا الله (*lā ilāha illallāh* : there is no god worthy of worship but Allah). Al-Qurṭubī, after reporting this narration in his Tafsīr, has said: It means the fulfilling of this pledge practically as signified by the Kalimah Ṭayyibah: *Lā ilāha illallāh*. A simple verbal statement is not what is desired here because, as for verbal attestation, that was done by the hypocrites (*munāfiqīn*) too. Haḍrat al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى said: 'Īmān (faith) does not become a living reality by taking on a particular style and form, and *Dīn* (religion) does not prosper by simply having the best of wishes for it. 'Īmān is the name of that certitude which has been poured into the heart and which has been proved true by deeds. This is well illustrated by a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Arqam ؓ in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: A person who says: لا اله الا الله (*lā ilāha illallāh* : there is no god worthy of worship but Allah) with *ikhlāṣ* (totally unalloyed sincerity) will definitely go to Jannah. People asked: *Yā Rasūl Allah,* how is '*ikhlāṣ*' related to this Kalimah? He said: When this Kalimah stops a person from what has been prohibited by Allah as unlawful and impermissible, then, it is with '*ikhlāṣ*' (with sincerity in the absolute sense). (Qurṭubī)

On Spreading the Religious Message Stage by Stage As Convenient

Before the revelation of the verse (94): فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ (Now, proclaim what you are commanded to), the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين used to make Ṣalāh and recite Qur'ān secretly (lest they are seen and harmed). The process of passing on the religious message to others and the mission of teaching and training was also kept secret being limited to a counted few. The reason was that doing so openly would have given the disbelievers the opportunity to bring harm to them. In this verse (95), Allah Taʿālā has Himself taken the responsibility of seeing that they stay safe against those who deride their faith and bring harm to them. Therefore, from that time onwards, the mission was

pursued openly and publicly in all its aspects, recitation of the Qur'ān, acts of worship, the call, the propagation, everything.

The people who have been referred to in the verse: إِنَّا كَفَيْنَٰكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِءِينَ (Surely, We are sufficient for you against those who deride - 95) their ring leaders were five in number: (1) Al-'Āṣ ibn Wā'il (2) Aswad ibn al-Muṭṭalib (3) Aswad ibn 'Abd Yaghūth (4) Walīd ibn Mughīrah (5) Ḥārith ibn Ṭalḥah. They were killed simultaneously and miraculously when signalled by Sayyidnā Jibra'īl.

This event provides a guideline in matters of Tablīgh and Da'wah. In places and under circumstances where a worker in the way of Allah sees no good coming out of saying what is true and right openly, rather apprehends harm coming to him in doing so, then, under such conditions, doing so secretly is also correct and permissible. However, when there is the option and ability to proclaim things openly, then, no delay should be made in taking a public stance.

The Spiritual Defence Against Enemy Hostility

From verses 97 and 98, we learn that should one face heart-rending sayings and doings of enemies the anxiety from which bothers him, then, there is a spiritual cure for that condition: Let him or her get busy with Tasbīḥ and 'Ibādah, praising Allah Ta'ālā and praying before Him. Allah Ta'ālā will Himself remove this pain and anxiety.

Alḥamdulillāh

The Commentary on

Sūrah Al-Ḥijr

Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Naḥl

(The Honey Bee)

Sūrah al--Naḥl is Makkī and it has 128 verses and 16 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 2

أَتَىٰٓ أَمْرُ ٱللَّهِ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوهُ ۚ سُبْحَـٰنَهُۥ وَتَعَـٰلَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١﴾ يُنَزِّلُ
ٱلْمَلَـٰٓئِكَةَ بِٱلرُّوحِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِۦ عَلَىٰ مَن يَشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِۦٓ أَنْ أَنذِرُوٓا۟ أَنَّهُۥ لَآ
إِلَـٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنَا۠ فَٱتَّقُونِ ﴿٢﴾

The command of Allah is bound to come. So, do not ask for it to come sooner. Pure is He, and much higher than what they ascribe to Him as partners. [1]

He sends down the angels at His behest with the spirit, (that is, the revelation), upon whom He wills from among His servants: 'Warn people that there is no god but Me. So, fear Me.' [2]

The Name of the Sūrah

This Sūrah has been called Al-Naḥl, that is, the honey bee because it mentions it as a unique Divine marvel. Another name for this Sūrah is Sūrah Al-Niʻam. (Qurṭubī) The word Niʻam is the plural of Niʻmah (blessing) because the great blessings of Allah Taʻālā have been particularly mentioned in this Sūrah.

Commentary

The Sūrah begins without any particular introduction with a direct,

stern and awesome note of warning. The reason behind it was the saying of the polytheists that Muḥammad (al-Muṣṭafā صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم) keeps warning them of the day of Qiyāmah and the punishment of Allah and telling them that Allah Ta'ālā has promised victory for him and punishment for his opponents. All this, they challenged, they do not see coming upon them. In reply, it was said: أَتَىٰ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوهُ (The command of Allah is bound to come. So, do not ask for it to come sooner - 1).

Here, the expression: أَمْرُ اللَّهِ (*amrullāh* : the command of Allah) means the promise Allah has made to His Rasūl - that his enemies will be made to surrender, and that Muslims will be blessed with victory and honour. In this verse, it is in a distinctly awesome tone that Allah Ta'ālā has said: أَتَىٰ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ (*atā amrullāh* : translated here as 'the command of Allah is bound to come'). Literally (the nuance of the original expression remaining untranslatable), the sense is that issued is the command of Allah, that is, it is bound to come which you will soon see.

Some commentators say that 'the command of Allah' here means the day of Qiyāmah. The sense of its being 'bound to come' is that it is going to come soon. And if we were to look at it in the frame of the life of the entire world itself, its being close, or its actual coming does not remain much distant. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

As for the second sentence in the first verse where it is said that Allah Ta'ālā is free of Shirk (the ascribing of partners to Him), it means that the act of these people who are belying the promise of Allah Ta'ālā is itself an act of Kufr (infidelity) and Shirk. Allah Ta'ālā is absolutely free from it. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

The essential message of the first verse is to call people to believe in the Oneness of Allah (*Tauḥīd*) through a stern warning. The second verse carries an affirmation of *Tauḥīd* through a reported proof, the substance of which is that every Rasūl or messenger of Allah, from Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to the Last of the Prophets ﷺ, who has come in different parts of the world at different times, has but preached this belief in the Oneness of Allah - though, none of them knew anything about the life and work of each other because of obvious causes. Just imagine if at least one hundred and twenty thousand blessed wise men who are born in different ages, countries and regions, and believe in and

adhere to one single principle, then, one is naturally compelled to accept that their saying so cannot be false. In order to have faith, this single proof is sufficient.

The word: روح (*rūḥ*: spirit) as used in this verse, according to Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, means Waḥy (revelation); and according to some commentators, it means Hidāyah (guidance). (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ) After having presented the reported proof of Tauḥīd in the second verse, the same belief has been proved rationally by turning the focus on the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā as it follows next in verses 3-8.

Verses 3 - 8

خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ تَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ خَلَقَ
الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ فَاِذَا هُوَ خَصِيْمٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٤﴾ وَالْاَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا ۚ لَكُمْ
فِيْهَا دِفْءٌ وَّمَنَافِعُ وَمِنْهَا تَاْكُلُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ وَلَكُمْ فِيْهَا جَمَالٌ حِيْنَ
تُرِيْحُوْنَ وَحِيْنَ تَسْرَحُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَتَحْمِلُ اَثْقَالَكُمْ اِلٰى بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُوْنُوْا
بٰلِغِيْهِ اِلَّا بِشِقِّ الْاَنْفُسِ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٧﴾ وَّالْخَيْلَ
وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيْرَ لِتَرْكَبُوْهَا وَزِيْنَةً ؕ وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾

He created the heavens and the earth in the proper way. He is much higher than what they ascribe to Him as partners. [3] **He created man from a drop, and soon he turned into a quarrelsome person expressing himself openly.** [4] **As for the cattle, He created them, having warmth for you, and other benefits; and of them you eat.** [5] **And for you there is beauty in them when you drive them (home) in the evening and take them out to graze.** [6] **And they carry your loads to a city where you were not able to reach without putting yourself into hardship. Surely, your Lord is Very Kind, Very Merciful.** [7] **And (He created) horses, mules and donkeys so that you may ride on them and they may look good. And He creates what you do not know (yet).** [8]

Lexical Explanation

The word: خَصِيم (*khaṣīm*) in verse 4 has been derived from: خصومة (*khuṣūmah*) and means a quarrelsome person. Al-Anʿām is the plural of *naʿam,* which are cattles such as the camel, goat and cow. (Al-Mufradat of Raghib al-Isfahānī)

The word: دِفْءٌ (*dif'un*) in verse 5 denotes what provides warmth, that is, wool which is used to make warm clothings. The word: تُرِيحُونَ (*turiḥūn*) in verse 6 is a derivation from *rawāḥ*, and: تَسْرَحُونَ (*tasraḥūn*) in the same verse, from *saraḥ*. When the cattle are sent to graze, it is called *saraḥ*, and when they return home, it is called *rawāh*. The expression: شِقِّ الْأَنْفُسِ (*shiqqil-anfus*) in verse 7 means personal hardship.

Commentary

The verses affirm the Oneness of Allah through the great signs of the creation of the universe. The first such creation pointed to is the creation of the heavens and the earth. Then comes the creation of human beings whom Allah Taʿālā has made the ones who are served by the whole universe. How did man originate? The text says that he was created from an insignificant drop. What happened then was: فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُّبِينٌ (and soon he turned into a quarrelsome person expressing himself openly). In other words, when the elementally weak man was endowed with strength and speech, he turned into a critic of the Creator Himself disputing His Being and Attributes publicly.

After human beings, mentioned there was the creation of things which were made specially for their benefit. Since the first addressees of the Qur'ān were Arabs and their economic life depended on domestic cattle like camels, cows and goats, therefore, these were taken up first: وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا (As for the cattle, He created them - 5).

Then, out of the benefits received by human beings from the cattle, two were particularly mentioned. (1) لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ (having warmth for you), that is, they use wool from them to make clothings which keep them warm during winters.

(2) The second benefit was mentioned in: وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (and of them you eat), that is, they can slaughter these animals and eat from their meat; and, when alive, they procure milk from them which is fine food indeed. Included here are butter, yogurt, butter-oil and everything else which

fall under dairy products.

For the rest of benefits derived from them, only one word: مَنَافِعُ (*manāfi'* : other benefits) was considered sufficient. It signifies that there are countless benefits tied to the meat, skin, bone and hair of animals. It is within the framework of this brevity, even ambiguity, that a hint has been given towards all modern innovations in the processing and use of food, dress, medicine and domestic articles, innovations which have been made to date, or will be made right through the Last Day.

After that, identified there is yet another benefit of these cattle - though, in terms of the contemporary Arab taste of the time - when it was said that these cattle make things look good for them particularly when they return home from their grazing grounds in the evening, or when they are sent out to graze in the mornings. The reason is that these cattle at that time become silent spokesmen of the strength and pride of their owners.

Finally, mention has been made of another important benefit which comes from these animals. They carry heavy loads to far out places, places which could not be reached 'without putting yourselves into hardship.' Out of the animals, camels and oxen have been particularly harnessed into this service of man at a large scale. Even during our day of trains, trucks and cargo planes, human beings cannot universally claim to have become free of their need. There are places in the world where none of our modern means of transportation can work. Consequently, one is compelled to borrow their services.

Since mention was made of '*an'ām*' that is, camels and oxen, it was appropriate that mention be made of quadrupeds which have been created exclusively for purposes of draft and ride. One does not benefit by their milk or meat because, according to religious law, they are the cause of moral diseases, hence prohibited. It was said: وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً 'And (He created) horses, mules and donkeys so that you may ride on them (which includes loading as a corollary) and (they were also created so that) they may look good - 8.' The word: زِينَةً (*zīnah*) used here means the same favourable quality of life which, as commonly recognized, is the pleasing possession of these animals by their owners.

Railroads, Automobiles and Aeroplanes in the Qur'ān!

In the last sentence of verse 8, after having mentioned three animals particularly used for riding, that is, horses, mules and donkeys, what was said about other kinds of rides appears in the future tense as follows:

وَيَخْلُقُ مَالَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ

And He creates [or, will create] what you do not know (yet).

Thus, under this very statement, included there are all newly invented transport facilities which did not exist in the past, nor was there any precise idea of what they shall be. For instance, there are railroads, automobiles and aeroplanes. Apart from these means of transport which have been invented to date, included here are all other ways and means which will be invented and used in the future. The reason is that the creation of all these things is really nothing but the act of the Absolute Creator. In it, the role of science, whether classical or modern, is no more than utilizing the God-given intelligence and understanding when handling metallic or other components also created by the same Power, go through experimentations, find appropriate combinations and construct working components. Then, it can go and generate energy from the Divinely endowed treasures of air, water, heat etc. No science, classical or modern, even both combined, can create iron and copper, or lighter metals, nor can it create wood, nor air, nor water. None of these come under its power or control. Science does no more than learn the art of using what has been created by Divine power. All inventions of the world are simply the detail of this usage. Therefore, with a little deliberation, one is left with no choice but to accept and declare that all our new inventions (for which we seem to be so fond of congratulating our own selves!) are invariably the creation of the Absolute Creator.

In view of its importance, let us keep in mind that the text has used the past tense: خَلَقَ (*khalaqa* : He created) while mentioning the creation of things earlier. However, after the mention of animals commonly used for riding, the tense used: يَخْلُقُ (*yakhluqu* : He will create, or creates) is that of future. This change clearly indicates that the word so used is for means of transport and other things which have not yet come into existence. But, Allah Ta'ālā has it in His Knowledge as to what modes of travel and other things are to be created in times to come. All this was

said in this small sentence here.

It was also possible that Allah Ta'ālā would have mentioned all new inventions to come into being in the future by name. But, the mention of words signifying railroads, automobiles and aeroplanes would have brought no benefit except that it would have left people bewildered in mental confusion - because the very conceptualization of such things at that time was not easy, nor were such words in use for such things anywhere so that people could make some sense out of them.

My respected father, Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Muḥammad Yāsīn رحمه الله تعالى said: Our teacher, Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Muḥammad Ya'qūb Nānautawī رحمه الله تعالى, the great teacher of teachers, used to say: 'The rail (railway, railroad) has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān.' For proof, he quoted this verse. Cars, though invented, were not common in those days, while the aeroplanes were not invented yet. Therefore, he found it sufficient to mention the 'rail.'

Rulings:

1. The Qur'ān first mentioned *al-an'ām*, that is, the camel, cow and goat. Then, out of their benefits, one such benefit was declared to be the eating of their meat. Then, as separate from it, it was said: وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيْرَ (and horses, mules and donkeys). When pointing out to their benefits, definite mention was made of their use for riding, and that they may look good by having them. But, the eating of their meat has not been mentioned here. This provides the proof that the meat from horse, mule and donkey is not Ḥalāl. As for the meat from mule and donkey is concerned, the majority of Fuqahā' (Muslim jurists) agree upon its meat being Ḥarām - and in a Ḥadīth on the subject, its unlawfulness has been clearly stated. But, in the case of horse meat, there are two conflicting narrations of Ḥadīth. One of them puts it as Ḥalāl, while the other, as Ḥarām. Therefore, sayings of the Fuqahā' of the Muslim community became divided on this religious issue. Some declared it to be Ḥalāl while others called it Ḥarām. It was because of these conflicting arguments that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, did not call horse meat Ḥarām like the meat of a donkey or mule, but he did call it Makrūh (reprehensible). (Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by Al-Jaṣṣāṣ).

2. From verse 6 and 8, it appears that beauty and embellishment are

allowed - though, pride and arrogance are Ḥarām (prohibited). The difference is that the outcome of beauty and embellishment is that it makes one happy with himself, or that it shows the blessing of Allah openly. When this happens, neither does one nurse the idea in his heart that he is deserving of this blessing, nor does he take others to be low and contemptible. Instead, such a person keeps the fact, that all good things of life given to him are but the gift and blessing of Allah Ta'ālā, foremost in his mind. Contrary to this is pride and arrogance under which one takes himself to be deserving of this blessing while taking others to be low. That is Ḥarām (forbidden). (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 9

وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ قَصْدُ السَّبِيْلِ وَمِنْهَا جَآئِرٌ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ لَهَدٰىكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿٩﴾

And undertaken by Allah is (to show) the right path while there are some (paths) which swerve; and had He so willed, He would have led you all to the right path. [9]

Commentary

Presented in the previous verses was a description of the great blessings of Allah Ta'ālā as rational proof of His Oneness. This description of Divine blessings continues later on as well.

In between these two, the present verse (9) has been introduced parenthetically for the purpose of warning that Allah Ta'ālā, pursuant to His standing promise, has taken it upon Himself that He makes the straight path which takes its follower to Allah Ta'ālā clear and explicit. Therefore, the objective of the presentation of Divine blessings is to demonstrate proofs of the Being and Oneness of Allah Ta'ālā.

But, counter to this, people have preferred to go by other crooked ways. It is unfortunate that, despite having clear signs and open proofs, they do not benefit by them. Instead, go on straying endlessly.

After that it was said that Allah Ta'ālā, if He had so willed, would have made all of them to (compulsively) be on the right path. Had He done so, it was within His power. But, wisdom and expedient considerations required that there be no compulsion. Let the two paths be before everyone. Whoever elects to take whichever path should be free to take

it. Everyone goes his or her way. The Straight Path (*al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*) will take people to Allah Taʿālā and Jannah (Paradise). As for other crooked ways, they will take people to Jahannam (Hell). Human beings have been given the power to choose whichever path they wish to take.

Verses 10 - 16

هُوَ الَّذِيٓ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً لَّكُمْ مِّنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَّمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيْهِ
تُسِيْمُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ يُنْۢبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُوْنَ وَالنَّخِيْلَ وَالْاَعْنَابَ
وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾
وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۙ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ؕ وَالنُّجُوْمُ مُسَخَّرٰتٌۢ
بِاَمْرِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَمَا ذَرَاَ لَكُمْ فِي
الْاَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا اَلْوَانُهٗ ؕ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾
وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَاْكُلُوْا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَّتَسْتَخْرِجُوْا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً
تَلْبَسُوْنَهَا ۚ وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاخِرَ فِيْهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَاَلْقٰى فِي الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَ بِكُمْ وَاَنْهٰرًا
وَّسُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَعَلٰمٰتٍ ؕ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾

He is the One who sent down water from the heavens from which you have your drink and from which (you grow) plants, on which you pasture cattle. [10] **He causes thereof to grow for you the crops, and olives, and date-palms, and grape-vines, and of all the fruits. Surely, in that, there is a sign for a people who ponder.** [11]

And He has subjugated for you the day and the night and the sun and the moon. And the stars (too) are subservient by His command. Surely, in that, there are signs for a people who understand. [12]

And (He subjugated) for you whatever He created on the earth having varied colours. Surely, in that, there is a sign for a people who accept advice. [13]

And He is the One who has subjugated the sea so that you may eat fresh meat therefrom, and may take out from it ornaments you wear, and you see the boats cleaving through it, and so that you may seek of His bounty and that you may be grateful. [14]

And He placed mountains on the earth, lest it should shake with you, and rivers and tracks, so that you may find the right way. [15] **And (He created) signs. And through stars they find the right path.** [16]

Commentary

The word: شَجَر (*shajar*) in verse 10: مِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيْهِ تُسِيْمُوْنَ (from which [you grow] plants, on which you pasture cattle) is mostly applied to a tree which stands on a trunk. Sometimes, it is also applied, in an absolute sense, to everything which grows on land. Included therein are grass on stems or tendrils. This is the sense meant in this verse, because the pasturing of cattle has been mentioned immediately after which is mostly related to grass.

The last word: تُسِيْمُوْنَ (*tusīmūn*) is a derivation from *isāmah* which means to leave cattle to graze freely in a pasture.

It will be noticed that all verses cited above point out to Divine blessings and mention the creation of the universe with unprecedented wisdom. In them, those who ponder find significant indicators and proofs which lead them to perceive the truth of Tauḥīd, the truth that Allah Ta'ālā is One. Therefore, while these blessings are being mentioned, they are tied up with a notice to pay attention, think, understand and accept advice. Consequently, at the end of verse 11, it was said: اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ (Indeed, in that, there is a sign for a people who ponder). The reason is that the linkage of pastures, crops, trees and their flowers and fruits with the creativity and wisdom of Allah Ta'ālā needs some reflection. If one ponders over a grain or pit, he will come to realize that simply putting it inside the land and watering it cannot automatically cause it to grow into a huge big tree with flowers of many colours opening up all over it. No tiller or farmer or land owner has made this happen. Their role in this process is nil. All this is linked with and tied to the creativity and wisdom of the Absolute Master.

After that, when came the description of the night and day, the sun,

the moon and the stars which have been made subservient by His command, it was said in the concluding sentence of verse 12: إِنَّ فِى ذٰلِكَ لَأٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ (Indeed, in that, there are signs for a people who understand). Given here is the hint that these things are of course subservient to the command of Allah, an open fact which does not need a lot of thinking. Anyone having some reason in him would understand, because there was obviously some human input in the growth of vegetation and trees, but, in this case, there is none.

Before we move to the next verse, let us clarify the first sentence of verse 12: سَخَّرَلَكُمُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ (And He has subjugated for you the day and the night). Here, 'subjugating the day and the night' means that Allah made them subservient to His command in order that they can serve man, pursuant to which the night brings comfort to him and the day smooths out the avenues of his work. 'Subjugating them' never means that the day and the night start alternating under human command.

Then, in verse 13, after mentioning all other varied produce of the land, it was said: إِنَّ فِى ذٰلِكَ لَأٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّذَّكَّرُوْنَ (Surely, in that, there is a sign for a people who accept advice). The sense is that no deep thinking is needed here as well - because, the proof has been furnished openly. But, the condition is that one must look at it carefully and learn his lesson. Otherwise, one who has no sense or concern and who just pays no attention could hardly hope to benefit from it.

After the description of things created in the heavens and the earth, and the benefits human beings derive from them, the text now turns to the high seas wherein Divine wisdom has placed many more benefits for them. Verse 14 which begins with the words: هُوَالَّذِى سَخَّرَالْبَحْرَ لِتَاْكُلُوا (And He is the One who has subjugated the sea so that you may eat) which points out to the excellent arrangement whereby they get their supply of sea food, fresh white meat from the fish.

By calling the fish, fresh meat, in the sentence which follows immediately, that is: لِتَاْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا (so that you may eat fresh meat therefrom - 14), a hint has also been placed within the statement that it is free of any condition of slaughtering necessary with other animals. That is, as if, meat made ready, without having to do so. This was the first benefit.

The second benefit is indentified in the sentence appearing immedi-

ately next: وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُوْنَهَا (and may take out from it ornaments you wear - 14), that is, divers would dive in it and take out what the text calls: حِلْيَه (*ḥilyah*: translated as ornaments). The literal meaning of *ḥilyah'* is *zinah*, that which beautifies, embellishes, adorns or ornaments. Thus, the reference here is to pearls and precious coral stones which are taken out of the sea. Women wear it as necklaces or earrings. Though these ornaments are worn by women, yet the Holy Qur'ān has used the word in the masculine gender: تَلْبَسُوْنَهَا (*talbasūnaha*), that is, 'you wear.' What has been hinted here is that the wearing of ornaments by women is, in reality, in the interest of men. That woman looks good is, in reality, the right of man. He can even compel his wife to wear dress and ornaments which look good on her. Other than that, men too can use precious stones on their rings.

The third benefit of the sea appears in: وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاخِرَ فِيْهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ (And you see the boats cleaving through it and so that you may seek His bounty - 14). The word: فُلْك (*fulk*) means boat, and: مَوَاخِر (*mawākhir*) is the plural of مَاخِرَه : *mākhirah*. Makhr (مَخر) means to cleave or plough through the water. The reference is to boats and ships which traverse the sea cleaving through the waves of the waters.

The sense of the verse (14) is that Allah Ta'ālā has made the sea one of the means of reaching distant countries. Thus, He has made it easy for human beings to travel by sea and bring in or send out their commercial goods. The text also declares it to be an excellent means of seeking the bounty of Allah, that is, their *rizq* or sustenance - because, trading through the sea routes is most economical and beneficial.

In Verse 16, it was said: وَاَلْقٰى فِي الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَبِكُمْ (And He placed mountains on the earth, lest it should shake with you). The word: رَوَاسِيَ (*rawāsiya*) is the plural of رَاسِيَه (*rāsiyah*) which denotes a huge mountain. The word: تَمِيْد (*tamīda*) is a derivation from the verbal noun: مَيْد (*mayd*) which means to shake or swing or sway from side to side (due to loss of balance).

The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā has not made the sphere of the Earth from components which are not solid and balanced, therefore, it is heavier on one side and lighter on some other. Its necessary outcome was that the Earth was to be taken as stationary, as commonly

held by early thinkers; or, taken to be orbitally moving, as determined by some early and most modern scientists. Under both these views, this phenomenon would have caused terristerial turbulence which is identified as shaking, swinging or swaying from side to side. To stop this turbulence and to provide a balance for the terristerial composition, Allah Ta'ālā placed on the Earth the weight of mountains so that it would not shake. As for its orbital movement like all planets which is the commonly held view from Pythagorus to modern scientists made more explicit through contemporary experiments, it is something which the Holy Qur'ān neither affirms nor rejects. In fact, this possible turbulence which has been stopped through the use of mountains should be more conducive to this orbital movement which is credited to the Earth like other planets. Allah knows best.

In the last verse (16), it was said: وَعَلٰمٰتٍ ۭ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ 'And (He created) signs. And through stars they find the right path.' Since trade-oriented travel was mentioned above, it was considered appropriate that conveniences which Allah Ta'ālā has provided in the heavens and the earth designed to help travellers cover distances and reach destinations be mentioned alongside. Therefore, it was said: وَعَلٰمٰتٍ (*wa 'alāmāt*), that is, 'We have set up many signs in the form of mountains, rivers, trees, homes and things like that in order to help people find their way on the earth.' It is obvious that, had the earth been flat, there was no way man would stray around in his effort to reach his destination.

As for the last statement in the verse: وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ that is, the way travellers know their bearing through territorial signs, quite similarly, they also find out their orientation through stars as well. The modality of the address here seems to hint that the initial purpose of the creation of the stars is, for that matter, something else - however, alongwith it, their additional benefit is that they help in the charting of one's course when travelling.

Verses 17 - 23

اَفَمَنْ يَّخْلُقُ كَمَنْ لَّا يَخْلُقُ ۭ اَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۱۷﴾ وَاِنْ تَعُدُّوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ
لَا تُحْصُوْهَا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّوْنَ وَمَا

تُعْلِنُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ
يُخْلَقُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ أَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ أَحْيَاءٍ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٢١﴾
إِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مُنْكِرَةٌ وَهُمْ
مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ إِنَّهُ
لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Then, is He who creates (everything) equal to one who does not? Would you still pay no heed? [17]

And if you count the bounties of Allah, you cannot count them all. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [18] **And Allah knows what you conceal and what you reveal.** [19]

And those whom they invoke beside Allah do not create anything, rather they are themselves created [20] **- dead, having no life. And they do not know when they shall be raised again.** [21] **Your God is One God. So, those who do not believe in the Hereafter, their hearts are defiant and they are arrogant.** [22] **Invariably, Allah knows what they conceal and what they reveal. Surely, He does not like the arrogant.** [23]

Commentary

Verses appearing immediately earlier described the many blessings of Allah Taʻālā in details, proved that He alone is their Creator and established that He is unique in this matter. Now, in the present verses, there comes an admonition against the failure of people to recognize that there is a fact behind the statement describing all these blessings - and that is Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah Taʻālā, except whom there is none worthy of worship. Therefore, it was said: When it stands proved that Allah alone made the heavens and the earth, made the mountains and rivers, vegetation and animals, trees and plants with their fruits and flowers, how can that most sacred Being that is the Creator of all these things become, for no reason, like idols and icons which cannot create anything? Why would you not understand something so elementary?

Verses 24 - 29

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُم مَّاذَآ أَنزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ ۙ قَالُوٓا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ لِيَحْمِلُوٓا
أَوْزَارَهُمْ كَامِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۙ وَمِنْ أَوْزَارِ الَّذِينَ يُضِلُّونَهُم بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ
أَلَا سَآءَ مَا يَزِرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَأَتَى اللَّهُ بُنْيَانَهُم مِّنَ
الْقَوَاعِدِ فَخَرَّ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّقْفُ مِن فَوْقِهِمْ وَأَتٰهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ
لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يُخْزِيهِمْ وَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَآءِيَ الَّذِينَ
كُنتُمْ تُشَآقُّونَ فِيهِمْ ۚ قَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ إِنَّ الْخِزْيَ الْيَوْمَ
وَالسُّوٓءَ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفّٰهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ظَالِمِيٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ
ۖ فَأَلْقَوُا السَّلَمَ مَا كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ مِن سُوٓءٍ ۚ بَلٰٓى إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا كُنتُمْ
تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَادْخُلُوٓا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِينَ فِيهَا ۖ فَلَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى
الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

And when it is said to them, "What has your Lord sent down?" They say, "It is nothing but the tales of the ancient." [24] **Hence, they shall carry their burdens in full on the day of Judgment, and some of the burdens of those whom they mislead without knowledge. Remember, evil is the burden they carry.** [25]

Those before them did make plots. Then (the command of) Allah came upon their buildings (uprooting them) from the foundations. So roofs fell down upon them from above, and the punishment came to them from where they would not perceive. [26] **Then, on the Day of Judgment, He will put them to disgrace and will say, "Where are My partners for whom you used to quarrel?" Those endowed with knowledge will say, "Today, the disgrace and the ill fate are upon the disbelievers -** [27] **the ones to whom the angels brought death while they were (still) unjust to themselves." Then, they will take to submission, (yet will say), "We used to do nothing wrong." (They will be answered) Why not? Allah knows what you used to do.** [28] **Hence, enter the gates of Jahannam to live there for ever. And evil is the abode of the arrogant.** [29]

Commentary

It will be recalled that, after describing the blessings of Allah and proving that He was unique in the creation of the universe, the text made a pointed reference to how the polytheists chose to stick to their own ways of error. In the present verses, the text describes how they, not content with their own straying, tried that others should also go astray like them. The punishment they would get for doing that has also been stated here. Earlier to that (24), there is a question about the Qur'ān, and the addressees of the question, at this place, are the polytheists. It is their haughty and ignorant answer which has been mentioned here alongwith a warning of consequences for this attitude. Then, after five verses (30), the same question has been addressed to believers who fear Allah which is followed by their answer, and where a promise of reward for it has been mentioned.

The Holy Qur'ān does not explicity say as to who asked the question. Therefore, commentators have expressed different views in this matter. Some say that the question was asked by disbelievers. Others say that it was asked by Muslims. Still others take one question to have been asked by the polytheists while the other by Muslims. But, the Holy Qur'ān has kept it ambiguous. This is to indicate that there is no need to argue as to where the question came from. What has to be seen is the answer and, more importantly, its ultimate consequence - which, the Qur'ān has itself chosen to describe.

The essence of the answer given by the polytheists is that they simply refused to acknowledge that there was any word of Allah really revealed from Him. In fact, they dismissed the Qur'ān as nothing but tales of people from early ages. Thereupon, the Qur'ān admonished those unjust people for disinforming people about the Qur'ān by telling them that it was nothing but the tales of the ancient whereby they make others too go astray like them. As for the consequences, these they shall have to face. It means that the total curse of their sins has to fall on them anyway on the Day of Judgment, but part of the curse of the evil consequences of their role in misguiding others will also fall on them. Then it was said that the burden of sins which these people are piling up on their shoulders is a terribly evil burden.

Verses 30 - 34

وَقِيْلَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا مَاذَآ اَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا خَيْرًا ؕ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا فِيْ
هٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ ؕ وَلَدَارُ الْاٰخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ ؕ وَلَنِعْمَ دَارُ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۳۰﴾ جَنّٰتُ
عَدْنٍ يَّدْخُلُوْنَهَا تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ لَهُمْ فِيْهَا مَا يَشَآءُوْنَ ؕ
كَذٰلِكَ يَجْزِي اللّٰهُ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۳۱﴾ الَّذِيْنَ تَتَوَفّٰىهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ طَيِّبِيْنَ ۙ
يَقُوْلُوْنَ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمُ ۙ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾ هَلْ
يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَوْ يَاْتِيَ اَمْرُ رَبِّكَ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ
مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾
فَاَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّاٰتُ مَا عَمِلُوْا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾ ع

And it is said to the God-fearing, "What has your Lord revealed?" They say, "The best." Those who do good in this world, there is good for them. And, indeed, the abode of the Hereafter is much better. And excellent is the abode of the God-fearing - [30] **the eternal gardens they enter, with rivers flowing beneath them. For them there is what they desire. That is how Allah rewards the God-fearing -** [31] **the ones to whom angels bring death while they were pure (in beliefs and deeds). They (angels) say, "Peace on you! Enter Paradise for the deeds you have been doing."** [32]

They are waiting for nothing but that the angels come to them, or comes the command of your Lord. Similarly acted those who were before them. And Allah did not wrong them, rather they were doing wrong to themselves. [33] **So, the evil of what they did overtook them, and they were encircled by the very thing they used to mock at.** [34]

Verses 35 - 40

وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا لَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا عَبَدْنَا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ شَيْءٍ نَّحْنُ
وَلَآ اٰبَآؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَّمْنَا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ

قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ فَهَلْ عَلَى الرُّسُلِ إِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِيْ كُلِّ
أُمَّةٍ رَّسُوْلًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوْتَ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ هَدَى
اللّٰهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلٰلَةُ ۗ فَسِيْرُوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانْظُرُوْا
كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ إِنْ تَحْرِصْ عَلٰى هُدٰىهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ
لَا يَهْدِيْ مَنْ يُّضِلُّ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ نّٰصِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَأَقْسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ جَهْدَ
أَيْمَانِهِمْ ۙ لَا يَبْعَثُ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّمُوْتُ ۗ بَلٰى وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا وَّلٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ
النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِيْ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ فِيْهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِيْنَ
كَفَرُوْا أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا كٰذِبِيْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنٰهُ أَنْ نَّقُوْلَ
لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ﴿٤٠﴾

And the polytheists said, "If Allah had so willed, we would have not worshipped anything other than Him - neither we nor our forefathers - nor would we have made anything unlawful without (command from) Him." Similarly acted those who were before them. Therefore, the messengers are responsible for nothing but to convey the message clearly. [35]

And We did raise a messenger among every people, with the message, "Worship Allah and stay away from the Rebel." Then, there were some among them whom Allah guided, and there were others on whom deviation (from the right path) was established. So, travel on earth and see how was the fate of those who belied (the prophets). [36]

If you are keen on their guidance, then, (remember that) Allah does not lead to the right path the ones whom He lets go astray, and for them there are no helpers. [37] **And they swore by Allah, taking great pains in their oaths: "Allah shall not resurrect those who die." Why not? It is a promise on His part which is due to come true, but most of the people do not know.** [38] **- so that He discloses for them what they have been disputing about, and so that those who disbelieve may know that they were liars.** [39] **Our only word for a thing when We intend it is that We say to it, "Be," and it comes to be.** [40]

Commentary

The first doubt expressed by these disbelievers was: If Allah does not like our Kufr and Shirk and other unlawful deeds, why would He not stop us from doing so by force?

The absurdity of this doubt was all too evident. Therefore, instead of answering it, just saying words of comfort for the Holy Prophet ﷺ was considered sufficient, so that he does not feel sad about such senseless questions. The reason why their doubt was absurd is also obvious. Allah Ta'ālā has set up the system of this world on the basic arrangement that human beings have not been kept under compulsion totally. A kind of power to choose was given to them. If they use this choice in obedience to Allah, they have their reward for it; and if they use it to disobey Him, then, there stands His promise of punishment. That there will be a day of Judgment when the dead shall be resurrected and called to account for their deeds are the consequential outcome of this early warning. If Allah Ta'ālā had decided that He would force everyone to obey Him, who then would have dared to remain outside the fold of obedience to Him? But, His wisdom so required that such compulsion was not appropriate. Therefore, choice was given to human beings. Now, if the disbelievers were to say - had Allah disliked our ways, why would He not stop us by force? - it is an absurd and hostile question.

Has a Rasūl of Allah appeared in India and Pakistan too?

From verse 36 in the present Sūrah: وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا (And We did raise a messenger among every people), as well as from verse 24 of Sūrah Fāṭir: وَإِنْ مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ (And there is no group of people among whom there has not been a warner - 35:24), it outwardly appears that messengers may have also been sent to areas now known as India and Pakistan - whether residents of the area, or located in another country whose deputies or emissaries had reached there. Then, there is the verse of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ: لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتٰهُمْ مِّنْ نَّذِيرٍ (so that you may warn a people unto whom came no warner - 28:46). The sense released by the verse is that no warner had come before him to the people unto whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent. This can be answered by saying that this obviously refers to the people of Arabia who became the first addressees of the prophetic mission of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ - the fact being that no prophet since Sayyidnā Ismā'īl (عليه السلام) had appeared among them. There-

fore, the title given to these people in the Holy Qur'ān was أُمِّيِّيْنَ : "Ummiyyīn" (the unlettered ones). This does not necessarily imply that no prophet came before him in the rest of the world as well. Allah knows best.

Verses 41 - 42

وَالَّذِيْنَ هَاجَرُوْا فِى اللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوْا لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ فِى الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً ۚ وَلَاَجْرُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَكْبَرُ ۚ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾

And those who have migrated for the sake of Allah after they were oppressed, We shall give them a good place in the world and, of course, the reward of the Hereafter is much greater, if they only knew! [41] **- those who kept patient and who place trust in their Lord.** [42]

Commentary

The verb: هَاجَرُوْا (*hājarū*) is a derivation from *hijrat* (pausal : *hijrah*) which literally means to leave one's homeland. The leaving of one's homeland done for the sake of Allah is an act of great obedience and worship in Islam. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: ' اَلْهِجْرَةُ تَهْدِمُ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهَا ('Hijrah demolishes all sins that were before it').

This Hijrah is Farḍ (obligatory) and Wājib (necessary) under some situations while it is recommended as desirable and better (Mustaḥabb) under some others. Related injunctions have appeared in details under comments on verse 97 of Sūrah An-Nisā' : اَلَمْ تَكُنْ اَرْضُ اللّٰهِ وَاسِعَةً (Was not the earth of Allah wide enough that you might have sought refuge in it? - 3:97) [Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume II] Mentioned here at this place are particular promises which Allah Ta'ālā has made to Muhājirīn, those who do Hijrah, that is, leave their homeland for His sake.

How does Hijrah bring Better Life in the Present World?

In the verses cited above, two great promises have been made to Muhājirīn subject to some conditions: (1) To give them a good place right here in this world, and (2) To bless them with the greater reward of the Hereafter which is limitless. The expression: 'a good place in the world'

is highly comprehensive. It includes a good residence for the Muhājir (one who does Hijrah) as well as neighbours who are good. It also includes extended means of living, supremacy over hostile enemies, recognition and fair name among people, and honour which continues through the family, and progeny. (Qurṭubī)

The background of the revelation of the verse is basically the first Hijrah which the noble Companions made to Ethiopea. Then, the probability that it may include the Hijrah to Ethiopea as well as the Hijrah to al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah which came after that. Mentioned here in this verse are the same Muhājirīn to Ethiopea, or the Muhājirīn to Madīnah. Therefore, some scholars have said that this promise was for these blessed Ṣaḥābah only, that is, those who had made their Hijrah to Ethiopea, or those who had later done it to Madīnah. As for the promise of Allah, it stood already fulfilled within the present world, something witnessed openly. Everyone saw how Madīnah was made for them the real good place to live. Instead of hostile neighbours, they lived among those who were sympathetic, sharing and sacrificing. Enemies were conquered and subdued. Within a short period of time since their Hijrah, doors of ample sustenance were thrown open for them. The poor and needy of yester years became wealthy citizens of the day. Many countries of the world came under their sway. Such were their achiements in moral greatness and beauty of conduct that they remain receiving words of praise from friends and foes alike even to this day. Allah Ta'ālā blessed them with great honour, and their generations as well. These were things that were to take place in this world, which they did. Now, the promise of the Hereafter shall also be fulfilled. But, says Abū Ḥayyān in his Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ:

وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا عَامٌّ فِى الْمُهَاجِرِيْنَ كَائِنًا مَّا كَانُوا فَيَشْمَلُ اَوَّلَهُمْ وَآخِرَهُمْ

> The expression: اَلَذِّيْنَ هَاجَرُوا (And those who migrated) is general and inclusive of all those who leave their homeland whatever their country or time. Therefore, this includes all Muhājirīn, from the very first ones down to the last among them who do their Hijrah for the sake of Allah right upto the Last Day, the day of Al-Qiyāmah. (v. 5, p. 492)

This is also as required by the general exegetic rule under which a commentator relies on the general sense of the word, even though there

be a particular event or group as the prime cause of the revelation of the verse. Therefore, included in this promise are Muhājirīn of the whole world and of all times - and the fulfillment of both these promises for all Muhājirīn is certain.

A similar promise has been made for Muhājirīn in the following verse of Sūrah An-Nisā': وَمَنْ يُّهَاجِرْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ يَجِدْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُرٰغَمًا كَثِيْرًا وَّسَعَةً [And whoever migrates in the way of Allah he shall find many a place to settle and wide dimension (of resources) - 4:100] particularly promised wherein are spatial abundance and extensive means. But, alongwith these promises, the Holy Qur'ān has also put forth some qualifications of Muhājirīn and some conditions of Hijrah as well. Therefore, those deserving of the fulfillment of these promises can only be the Muhājirīn who possess these qualifications and who have satisfied the desired conditions.

Out of these, the very first condition is that of: فِي اللّٰهِ (*fil-lāh*: for the sake of Allah) which means that the purpose of doing Hijrah should only be to please Allah Ta'ālā and that, in it, there be no selfish motives of material gains such as business or employment. The second condition is that these Muhājirīn be victims of injustice as stated in: مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوْا (after they were oppressed). The third qualification is that they stay patient against initial disadvantages and difficulties showing steadfastness and fortitude as pointed out in: الَّذِيْنَ صَبَرُوْا (those who kept patient). The fourth qualification is that they, even while utilizing all available material means, make it a point to place their trust in Allah alone for every ultimate success comes from Him alone, as described in: وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُوْنَ (and who place trust in their Lord).

This tells us that there are initial difficulties in everything undertaken. However, should a Muhājir fail to find the promised good place and favourable condition, then, instead of doubting the promise of the Qur'ān, he better assess his intention, sincerity and conduct on which these promises have been made. Once this is done, he will discover that it was but his own fault, may be the intention was not pure, or there was a lack of endurance and trust.

Migration and Hijrah : Different Kinds and Their Injunctions

At this point, Imām Al-Qurṭubī has given details about migration and Hijrah highlighting their difference alongwith some related injunc-

tions. This is being reproduced here in view of its relevant usefulness.

Quoting Ibn al-'Arabī, Al-Qurṭubī says that going out of the homeland and travelling through the earth is either to run from something and find a safe haven, or to seek and get something. The first kind of trip which is to escape and be safe from something is called Hijrah which is of six kinds:

1. Going from Dār al-Kufr (Abode of Disbelief) to Dār al-Islām (Abode of Islām): This kind of journey was obligatory (Farḍ) even during the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and it shall remain obligatory, subject to capability and ability, right through the day of the Qiyāmah (when there is no security of life, property and honour, or that it is not possible to fulfill religious obligations, the Farā'iḍ of Dīn). If one continues to stay in Dār al-Ḥarb (technically an enemy country of disbelievers at war with Muslims), one will be considered a sinner.

2. To get out of Dār al-Bid'ah (Abode overtaken by deviation from established religion): Ibn Qāsim says that he had heard from Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى that it is not Ḥalāl for any Muslim to stay at a place where the early righteous elders of the Muslim community (*al-Salaf-al-Ṣaliḥūn*) are criticised and maligned. After reporting this statement, Ibn al-'Arabi writes that it is totally correct - because, should you be unable to eradicate the practice of what is forbidden, then, it becomes necessary for you that you should remove your own self from that place, and have nothing to do with it. This is as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā in the Qur'ān: وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِيْنَ يَخُوضُوْنَ فِيْٓ اٰيٰتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ (And when you see those who indulge in Our verses adversely, turn away from them - 6:68).

3. To get out of a place overtaken by what is Ḥarām: This is because the quest for what is Ḥalāl is obligatory (Farḍ) on every Muslim.

4. To move out in order to avoid being subjected to physical pain: This kind of journey is permissible. In fact, it is a blessing from Allah that one should leave a place where danger exists that he will be physically hurt by enemies. So, this is his way out of that danger. This fourth kind of journey was first made by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. It was to seek deliverance from the pain inflicted on him by his people. When he left 'Irāq for Syria, he had said: إِنِّيْ مُهَاجِرٌ إِلٰى رَبِّيْ (I am a *muhājir* [emigrant] unto my Lord - 29:26). After him, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام made a similar journey

from Egypt to Madyan: فَخَرَجَ مِنۡهَا خَآئِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ (he got out from there, fearing, watching - 28:21).

5. <u>To move out due to unsuitable climate or likely diseases</u>: This is the fifth kind of journey which has also been permitted by Islam as the Holy Prophet ﷺ had advised some shepherds to settle by the grooves outside Madinah because the climate of the city did not suit them. Similarly, Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq رضي الله عنه had sent an executive order to Sayyidnā Abū 'Ubaidah رضي الله عنه that he should should shift the provincial capital from Jordan to some site located on a higher altitude where the climate is not bad.

But, this is on condition that there be no plague or other epidemic diseases affecting the area. And if, an epidemic does spread out in an area, it is governed by another rule, that is, those who are already present there do not have to get out from that area. As for those who are outside it, they should not go in there - as it happened with Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq رضي الله عنه during his journey to Syria. When he reached the borders of Syria, he was told that a plague has spread throughout that country. Hearing that, he hesitated from entering that country. He went into repeated consultations with the Ṣaḥābah to resolve this problem. The resolution came only after Sayyidnā 'Abd Al-Raḥmān ibn Al-'Awf رضي الله عنه narrated a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ had said:

إِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَّأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا وَإِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَّلَسْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَهْبِطُوا عَلَيْهَا (رواه الترمذی وقال حديث حسن صحيح)

> When plague spreads in an area where you are present, do not go out from there; and when it spreads in an area where you are not already present, do not go in there (after having heard of plague). (This Ḥadīth has been reported by Tirmidhī who calls it Ḥasan Ṣaḥīḥ)

At that time, Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq رضي الله عنه, in obedience to the command of the Ḥadīth, proclaimed that the whole caravan shall turn back and go home.

Some 'Ulamā have pointed out that this Ḥadīth has a particular element of wisdom in it, that is, the people staying in an area affected by some epidemic are most likely to be infected by its germs. If they were to run away from there, the one who is infected dangerously is not going to

survive anyway, but he would infect others wherever he goes. Hence, the wise decision.

6. To secure personal property and possessions: When someone feels the danger of being hit by thieves and robbers at a certain place, he should move away from there. The Sharī'ah of Islam has permitted doing this as well because the property and possessions of a Muslim are as sacrosanct as his or her life.

These six kinds belong to migration undertaken to run for safety against something. Then, there is the journey undertaken to seek and get something. It has nine kinds:

1. The journey for moral self-correction: It means touring and travelling through Allah's earth for the particular purpose of witnessing the creation of Allah Ta'ālā, the manifestations of His most perfect power, and having a spot observation of the sad end of past peoples in order to learn one's essential lesson in how to live sensibly and confidently. The Holy Qur'ān has exhorted people to embark on such trips, for instance in: أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ (Have they not travelled around the earth and seen how was the end of those before them? - 35:44). 'Ulamā have identified the journey undertaken by Sayyidnā Dhul-Qarnain as a journey of this kind, while some of them suggest that his journey through the earth was to establish Divine Law on it.

2. The journey of Ḥajj: That it is an Islamic duty subject to some conditions is well known.

3. The journey of Jihād: All Muslims know that it is also either obligatory (*farḍ*), or necessary (*wājib*), or recommended (*mustaḥabb*).

4. The journey for employment: If a person cannot find economic support for his needs in his homeland, it is incumbent on him that he travels elsewhere and look for an employment opportunity there.

5. The journey for trading: It means travelling to acquire wealth in excess to the measure of need. According to Islamic legal norms, this too is permissible. Allah Ta'ālā says: لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَن تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ : 'There is no sin on you that you seek the bounty of your Lord (by trading) - 2:198.' Here, by 'seeking of bounty' in this verse, the reference is to trading. When Allah Ta'ālā has allowed trading even during the Ḥajj trip, then,

undertaking a journey for the sole purpose of trading becomes permissible in the first degree.

6. <u>The journey for education</u>: That it is an absolute duty in terms of religious need, and that it is an obligation of sufficiency (*farḍ al-kifāyah*: an obligation which, if discharged by some, would suffice for others) in terms of what is more than needed, is widely known and amply recognized.

7. <u>The journey to a place believing it to be sacred and blessed</u>: This is not correct and proper except for the three Masājid and they are: (1) Al-Masjid Al-Ḥarām (The Sacred Mosque of Makkah al-Mukarramah) (2) Al-Masjid An-Nabawiyy (The Mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, in Al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah) (3) Al-Masjid Al-Aqṣā (Baytul-Maqdis). [This is the view of Al-Qurṭubī and Ibn al-'Arabī. Other revered scholars of early Islam and their successors have also allowed the undertaking of travel to visit places generally considered blessed - Muḥammad Shafī'].

8. <u>The journey undertaken to guard Islamic frontiers</u>: This is known as *Ribāṭ*. There are many Ḥadīth reports which commend it strongly. (For details on *Ribāṭ*, please see our comments under Verse 200 of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān in Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, Volume II)

9. <u>The journey to visit relatives and friends</u>: This too has been classed as an act deserving of return and reward. A Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim mentions the prayer of angels in favour of those who undertake a journey to visit relatives and friends (which is valid only when the purpose of meeting them is to seek the pleasure of Allah Ta'ālā and not to seek any material gains). Allah knows best. (Qurṭubī, p. 349-351, v. 5, Sūrah An-Nisā')

Verses 43 -44

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ فَسْئَلُوْٓا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ
كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَالزُّبُرِ ۭ وَاَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ
لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾

And We did not send (messengers) before you other than

men whom We inspired with revelation. So, ask the people (having the knowledge) of the Message, if you do not know. [43] **(We sent them) with clear signs and scriptures. And We sent down the Message (The Qur'ān) so that you explain to the people what has been revealed for them and so that they may ponder.** [44]

Commentary

According to Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, it was after the revelation of the first verse cited above that the Mushrikīn of Makkah sent their emissaries to the Jews of Madinah to find out if it was true that all earlier prophets had always been from the genus of men.

Though, included under the Qur'ānic expression: أَهْلُ الذِّكْرِ (Ahludh-Dhikr) were the people of the Book and believers all together, but it was obvious that the Mushrikīn (disbelievers) were to be satisfied only by the statement of non-Muslims - because they themselves were not satisfied with what the Holy Prophet ﷺ was telling them. So, how could they accept the statement of other Muslims?

The word: ذِكْر (*dhikr*) in the combination of: أَهْلُ الذِّكْرِ [*Ahludh-Dhikr* : translated here as 'the people (having the knowledge) of the Message'] is used to carry more than one meaning. One of these is *'Ilm* or knowledge. It is in this sense that the Holy Qur'ān has identified the Torah too as Dhikr: وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ : 'And verily We have written in the Zabūr (Scripture, Psalms), after the *Dhikr* (the Message, Torah)' - 21:105. Similar to this is the statement which follows next: أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ [And We sent down the Message (The Qur'ān) to you - 21:106]. Here, the word: اَلذِّكْرُ (*Adh-Dhikr*) means the Qur'ān. Therefore, *'ahludh-dhikr'* literally means 'the people of knowledge' (as refined in the cited translation). And who are those referred to as Ahlul-'Ilm or 'the people of knowledge' at this place? As apparent in this case, they refer to the scholars among the people of the Book, the Jews and Christians. This is the view of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﵁, Ḥasan and As-Suddiyy and others. Then, there are scholars who have taken 'Adh-Dhikr' at this place as well in the sense of Al-Qur'ān, and thus explained 'Ahludh-Dhikr' in the sense of Ahlul-Qur'ān. However, the clearest position taken in this matter is that of Rummānī, Zajjāj and Azharī. They say:

المراد باهل الذكر علماء اخبار الامم السالفة كائنا من كان فالذكر بمعنى الحفظ

كانّه قيل اسألوا المطلعين على اخبارا لامم يعلموكم بذلك

'Ahludh-Dhikr' means authentic historians of past peoples based on this investigative position, this definition includes therein the people of the Book, the Jews and Christians, and the people of the Qur'ān, the Muslims as well.

The word: البَيِّنَات (*al-bayyināt*) in verse 44 means clear signs and miracles, the later being more aptly applicable here. The word: زُبُر (*zubur*) is the plural form of: زُبَرَة (*zubarah*) which means large pieces of iron as in: اٰتُوْنِیْ زُبَرَالْحَدِیْدِ (give me pieces of the iron - 18:96). Because of the relevance of putting pieces together, writing is called: زَبَر (*zabar*), and a written book is known as: الزِبْر (*az-zibr*) with its plural as: الزَّبُوْر (*az-zabūr*). In short, at this point, it means the Book of Allah which includes Torah, Injīl, Zabūr and Qur'ān.

Non-Mujtahids must follow Mujtahid Imāms: The Essence of Taqlīd

Though, the sentence: فَسْئَلُوْا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَاتَعْلَمُوْنَ [So, ask the people (having the knowledge) of the Message, if you do not know - 43] has appeared at this place in relation with a particular subject, but its words are general and are inclusive of all other matters of concern. Therefore, given the way Qur'ān has with words, this is really an important rule of procedure based on reason and revelation both, that is, those who do not know injunctions revealed for them ask those who do, and act accordingly. It is as simple as that. So, it is the duty of those who do not know that they should act in accordance with what they are told by those who do. This is what Taqlīd (to follow in trust) is. Not only that it is an explicit command of the Qur'ān, there is just no other way the mass practice of religion can be achieved, even if it was to be argued rationally. This rule has been in practice throughout the Muslim community right from the age of the noble Ṣaḥābah to this day without any division or difference. Even those who disavow Taqlīd do not reject the kind of Taqlīd under which those who are not 'Ālim (knowledgable in religion) should take Fatwā from the 'Ulamā' and act accordingly. And it is obvious that, even if the 'Ulamā' were to give proof of their view from the Qur'ān and Sunnah to masses of people who are unaware, they would still accept these arguments and proofs on the authority of, and trust and confidence in the same 'Ulamā'. They themselves do not have the ability to under-

stand and assess arguments and proofs presented. And Taqlīd is nothing but that one who does not know places his trust and confidence in someone who knows and accepts the injunction in question as the injunction of the Sharī'ah, and acts accordingly. This is one Taqlīd the justification of which - in fact, the necessity of which, leaves no room for any difference.

However, as for 'Ulamā' who themselves have the ability to understand Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and know the places where consensus (Ijmā') exists, they are free to act, in the case of such injunctions as have been clearly and explicitly mentioned in Qur'ān and Ḥadīth - and in which there exists no difference among the learned Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn as well - in these they can act directly according to Qur'ān, Ḥadīth and Ijma'. In these matters, 'Ulamā' need not follow (Taqlīd) any Mujtahid. But, there are particular injunctions and rulings which have not been explicitly spelt out in Qur'ān and Sunnah, or wherein there appears to be some contradiction in the *'āyāt* (verses) of the Qur'ān and the *riwāyāt* (narrations) of Ḥadīth, or in which there has come up some difference among the Ṣaḥābah and Tabi'in in determining the meaning of Qur'ān and Sunnah - such rulings and injunctions are the object of Ijtihād. In the terminology of Islamic Fiqh (jurisprudence), these are called issues and problems in which Ijtihād is possible. The rule which governs this is that an 'Ālim who does not possess the class and rank of Ijtihād, he too must follow one of the Mujtahid Imāms in these issues. Just relying on personal opinion, preferring one verse or narration and going by it while dismissing another verse or narration as less weightier is something not permissible for him.

Similarly, there are particular injunctions not mentioned explicitly in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. To deduce these out employing the principles provided by the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and to arrive at and determine their precise Islamic legal operative order (*al-ḥukm ash-shar'ī*), is the functional prerogative of only those Mujtahids of the Muslim Ummah who occupy the highest station of expertise in the Arabic language, its lexicography, idioms and modalities (*ṭuruq*) of usage, and who possess an additional mastery over all fields of knowledge related to Qur'ān and Sunnah, and above all, who are credited with a conduct of life marked by exemplary piety and godfearingness. Such people are no less than the

great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Shāfi'ī, Mālik, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, or Awzā'ī, jurist Abū Al-Laith and others like them. These were people Allah Ta'ālā had specially blessed. They lived closer to the age of prophethood, and that of the Ṣaḥābah and the Tabi'in. Under the canopy of this *barakah,* Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed upon them a very special taste of understanding the principles and objectives of the Sharī'ah and an equally special expertise of extracting textually non-prescribed (*ghayr manṣūṣ*) laws from the laws already prescribed in the sacred texts (*manṣūṣ*) by using the methodology of analogical deduction (*qiyās*). Now, in such issues and problem where Ijtihād efforts have been exhausted at the highest conceivable level, it is necessary even for the 'Ulamā' at large that they must follow one of the Mujtahid Imāms. Going by any new opinion contrary to that of the Mujtahid Imāms is error.

This is why great men of learning, 'Ulamā', Muḥaddithīn and Fuqahā' like Imām al-Ghazālī, Rāzī, Tirmidhī, Ṭaḥāwī, Ma'zini, Ibn Humām, Ibn Qudāmah and hundreds and thousands of early and later men of learning of the same standard, despite their high expertise in fields of Arabicism and Islamic Religious Law, have always remained voluntarily restricted to following Mujtahid Imāms invariably. They never considered it permissible to give a Fatwā following their own opinion, contrary to all Mujtahid Imāms.

Nonetheless, these blessed souls did have that standard ranking in learning and piety that they assessed the sayings of the Mujtahid Imāms on the anvil of proofs from the Qur'ān and Sunnah, after which they would go by the saying of the Imām which they found, out of the sayings of the Mujtahid Imāms, closest to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. But, they never thought it to be permissible either to depart from the appraoch taken by Mujtahid Imāms or to hold some opinion contrary to all of them. The essential reality of Taqlīd is no more than what has been stated here.

After that, came a gradual decline in the standards of knowledge and what was originally based on Taqwā and godliness came to be contaminated with personal interests and preferences. Under such conditions, given the kind of liberty that people could go by the saying of any one Imām in a religious problem of their choice and opt for the saying of some other Imām in some other problem they choose, the inevitable out-

come would be that people would start following their worldly desires in the name of following the Shari'ah by opting for the saying of an Imām which is more conducive to the fulfillment of their worldly desire. This is, as obvious, no following of a religion or Sharī'ah. In fact, this would be the following of one's own interests and desires - which is Ḥarām by the consensus of the entire Muslim Ummah. In Muwāfqāt, Allāmah Shaṭibī has dealt with this subject in great details. And Ibn Taymiyyah too, despite his opposition to Taqlīd at large, has rated this type of following in his Fatāwa as being Ḥarām by the consensus of the Muslim Ummah.

Therefore, later day jurists of Islam considered it necessary that all those who act according to the precepts of the Sharī'ah should be made to follow only one of the Mujtahid Imāms. From here began what was to be known as 'personal following' (*Taqlīd Shakhṣi*) which, in reality, is a functional operative order to keep the system of religion in tact so that people do not succumb to following their own desires under the cover of religion. This is precisely what Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī ﷺ did with the total agreement of the noble Ṣaḥābah when he restricted the seven versions (سبعة احرف) of the Qur'ān to only one version - though all seven versions were reading of the Qur'ān and were revealed through angel Jibra'īl as wished by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But, when the Holy Qur'ān spread all over non-Arab countries, the danger that it might be altered or interpolated because of its seven readings became acute. So, it was by a total agreement of the Ṣaḥābah that Muslims were instructed to write and recite the Qur'ān in one version only. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī ﷺ arranged to have all copies of the Qur'ān written according to this one version which he despatched to various parts of the world. The entire Muslim Ummah follows this Qur'ān even to this day. This never means that other versions were not true or authentic. The fact is that this one version was taken to in the interest of a better management of religious affairs and so that the Qur'ān stays protected against any possible alterations or interpolations.[1] Similarly, all Mujtahid Imāms are true. When one of them is chosen to be followed, it never means that other Imāms are not worthy of being followed. Far from it, it is only a

1. All this discussion is based on the theory of Allāmah Ibn Jarīr رحمه الله about the "Seven Versions" (سبعة أحرف). For a detailed treatment of the subject, please see my introduction at the beginning of volume I. (Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī)

functional arrangement. One decides for himself in terms of his convenience he has in following a particular Imām. But, while doing so, he also considers other Imāms as worthy of the same respect.

This is totally similar to a situation where it is considered necessary that only one of the many physicians present in town be chosen and assigned particularly for the treatment of a sick person. The reason is that it is not advisable for the patient that he goes about following his personal opinion in using the prescription of one physician at some time and that of another physician at some other time. Such a method of seeking solutions to one's medical problem is patently fatal. It should be understood that the choice of a specific physician made by the patient for his treatment never means that other physicians are no experts, or lack the capability of proper treatment.

The reality of the different juristic schools Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, Mālikī and Ḥanbalī that emerged in the Muslim Ummah was no more than what has been stated. As for giving it the touch of sectarianism and factionalism or increasing the heat of mutual confrontation and dissention is concerned, it is no valid mission of the revealed religion, nor have the discerning and far-sighted 'Ulamā' ever considered it good. That which happened was that scholarly debate and research by some 'Ulamā' became coloured with polemics which later reached the level of blames and satirical remarks. Then came ignorance-based confrontation which brought people to the outer limit where this state of affairs became the very indicator of being religious!

فالى الله المشتكى ولا حول ولا قوة الاّ بالله العلى العظيم

So, before Allah is the complaint and there is no strength and there is no power except with Allah, the High, the Great.

Note of Caution

What has been written here on the religious question of Taqlīd and Ijtihād is only a very brief summary of the subject, which is sufficient for Muslims at large. As for scholarly research and details of the subject, they are present in books of Uṣūl al-Fiqh. Worth mentioning are: (1) Kitāb al-Muwāfqāt by Allāmah Shāṭibī, v. IV, Bāb Al-Ijtihād; (2) Kitāb Iḥkām al-Aḥkām by Allāmah Saifuddīn al-'Āmidī, v. III, al-Qā'idah ath-thālitha fī al-mujtahidīn; (3) Ḥujjatullahil-Bālighah and 'Iqd al-Jīd

by Ḥaḍrat Shāh Waliyyullah Ad-Dihlawī; and (4) Kitāb al-Iqtiṣād fī at-Taqlīd wa al-Ijtihād by Ḥaḍrat Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavī. Interested scholars may wish to refer back to them.

Ḥadīth is Necessary to Understand Qur'ān : The Rejection of Ḥadīth is Really the Rejection of the Qur'ān

The word: الذِّكۡرَ (*adh-dhikr*) in verse 44: وَاَنۡزَلۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡكَ الذِّكۡرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ : "And We sent down the Message (*adh-dhikr*: The Qur'ān) so that you explain to the people," means, by consensus, the Holy Qur'ān - and, in this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been given the assignment of explaining the meaning of verses revealed to him before people. Herein lies an open proof that the correct understanding of the realities, insights and injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān depends on the statement of the Prophet of Islām, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. If everyone, by simply acquring the knowledge of Arabic language and literature, were to become capable of understanding the injunctions of the Qur'ān as Divinely intended, then, the mission of explaining assigned to the Holy Prophet ﷺ would have been rendered meaningless.

In Al-Muwāfqāt, Allāmah Shāṭibī has provided detailed proof that the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the whole of it, is the explanation of the Book of Allah because the Qur'ān has said about the Holy Prophet ﷺ: وَاِنَّكَ لَعَلٰى خُلُقٍ عَظِيۡمٍ (And surely you are at the height of a sublime nature - 68:4) and which was explained by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها by saying: كَانَ خُلُقُهُ الْقُرْاٰن (The Qur'ān was his sublime nature). Thus, the outcome is that every word and deed which provenly issued forth from the Holy Prophet ﷺ is nothing but what was said by the Qur'ān. Some of these are the explanation of a verse of the Holy Qur'ān in express and obvious terms, while in some cases there appears no express mention about them in the Holy Qur'ān, but they are nonetheless based on some kind of revelation, though it was not made part of the Holy Qur'ān. Thus, that too, in a certain way, comes under the operative purview of the Qur'ān itself. This is because according to the clarification of the Qur'ān nothing that he says is prompted by his personal desire, instead of which, it is a Wahy (revelation) from Allah Ta'ālā: وَمَا يَنۡطِقُ عَنِ الۡهَوٰى اِنۡ هُوَ اِلَّا وَحۡىٌ يُّوۡحٰى (and nor does he talk from desire. It is nothing but a revelation revealed - 53:3-4). This tells us that all acts of worship, dealings with people, personal morals and habits of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were, all of

them, through Divine revelation and have the same authority as that of the Qur'ān. Then, there are occasions when he has done something as based on his Ijtihād in which case it is ultimately - either through Divine revelation or through an absence of any restraining order - corrected and supported. Therefore, that too stands empowered with the authority of Wahy (revelation).

To sum up, it can be said that this verse has declared that the purpose for which the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent is the explaining of the Qur'ān. This purpose of his mission in this world has also been mentioned in several verses of Sūrah Al-Jumu'ah, and elsewhere too, where it has been referred to as the Ta'līm of Al-Kitāb or Teaching of the Book. Now turn your attention to the great treasure of Ḥadīth which one of the most talented and intellectually peerless people of our community, right from the Ṣaḥābah and Tabi'īn all the way to the Muḥaddithīn of the later period, have guarded more than their lives and delivered it to the Muslim Ummah as *fait accompli.* These were people who spent their whole lives sifting through this treasure and went on to establish the categories of Ḥadīth narrations. As for narrations which they did not find matching enough in authority for the purpose of basing Islamic legal injunctions on them, these they have separated from the treasure of Ḥadīth. Instead, they have simply written standard books based exclusively on these narrations, which have proved correct and reliable after life-long criticisms and researches.

If today a person calls this treasure of Ḥadīth unreliable under one or the other pretext or artifice, it plainly means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ acted against this Qur'ānic injunction when he did not explain what the Qur'ān had said; or, that he had explained it but his explanation did not remain preserved for posterity. Under either of the two conditions, it is being suggested that the Qur'ān has not remained protected as to its meaning - the responsibility of protecting which has been undertaken by Allah Ta'ālā Himself: وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحٰفِظُونَ [We, Ourselves, have sent down the Dhikr (the Qur'ān) and We are there to protect it - 15:9]. This claim or inference of such a person is contrary to this textual authority (*nass*) of the Qur'ān. From here it stands proved that a person who refuses to accept the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a binding authority of Islam is, in reality, a denier of the Qur'ān itself. Na'ūdhubillāh: May Allah protect

us from it.

Verses 45 - 47

أَفَأَمِنَ الَّذِينَ مَكَرُوا السَّيِّاٰتِ أَنْ يَّخْسِفَ اللّٰهُ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ أَوْ يَأْخُذَهُمْ فِي تَقَلُّبِهِمْ فَمَا هُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ أَوْ يَأْخُذَهُمْ عَلٰى تَخَوُّفٍ ۚ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٤٧﴾

Do they who contrive evil plots feel immune from that Allah makes the earth cave in with them, or from that the punishment comes to them from where they would not perceive, [45] **or that He seizes them while roaming about - while they are not to frustrate Him -** [46] **or that He seizes them while they are in apprehension? So, indeed your Lord is Very Kind, Very Merciful.** [47]

Commentary

In verses appearing previously: ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ يُخْزِيهِمْ (Then, on the day of Judgment, He will put them to disgrace - 27), disbelievers were warned against the punishment of the Hereafter. In the present verses, they have been further warned that it is also possible that they are caught in the punishment from Allah right here in this world much before the punishment of the Hereafter, may be you are sunk into the earth you are sitting on, or you are seized by the punishment of Allah coming from a direction totally inconceivable for you. This is how it happened during the Battle of Badr when they received a punishment at the hands of some ragtag Muslims arrayed against their thousand strong armed youngmen, something they would have never perceived as possible. Or, it was also probable that they be seized by some Divine punishment while roaming about freely, such as, they be hit by a fatal disease, or that they run into an accident by falling down from some height, or simply die by colliding against some hard object. Also possible is yet another form of punishment when punishment may not come all of a sudden, but a general decrease sets in causing wealth, health, fitness, means of sustenance and comfort and peace go on shrinking so much so that the day comes when the people so punished disappear from the face of the earth for

good.

The word: تخوّف (*takhawwuf*) appearing in verse 47 is obviously a derivation from: خوف (*khawf*: fear, apprehension). Some commentators have explained this verse in terms of this very sense by saying that one group of people be seized in punishment so that the second group gets apprehensive. Similarly, the second group is seized in punishment which makes the third group become apprehensive. Finally, struck with dread sequentially, comes the end for all of them.

But, the early exegete of the Qur'ān, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and Mujāhid and other Imāms of Tafsīr have taken the word: تخوّف (*takhawwuf*) in the sense of: تنقّص (*tanaqquṣ*). So, it is in accordance with this Tafsīr that it has also been translated in the later sense of 'reducing or decreasing gradually.'

The noble *tābi'ī* Sa'id ibn al-Musaiyyāb says: When Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ also faced some hesitation about the sense of this word, he addressed the Ṣaḥābah from the Minbar and asked them as to what they understood to be the meaning of *'takhawwuf'*? The audience at large remained silent. But, a person from the tribe of Hudhayl submitted: O Commander of the Faithful, this is a particular idiom of our tribe. We use this word in the sense of *tanaqquṣ*, that is, to decrease gradually. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ asked: Do the Arabs use this word in the sense of *tanaqquṣ* in their poetry? He said that they do, and cited a couplet by Abū Kabir al-Hudhali, a poet from his tribe, in which this word was used in the sense of decreasing gradually. Thereupon, Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ said: O people, learn about the poetry of Jāhiliyyah because there lies the key to the explanation of your Book and the sense of your speech.

For the Understanding of Qur'ān, a Passing Knowledge of Arabic is Not Sufficient

The first thing the report referred to above proves is that the ability to speak and write the Arabic language is not enough for the understanding of Qur'ān. Rather, necessary for this purpose is a level of effeciency and awareness which could help one understand the classical work done during the early period of the Arabs of Jāhiliyyah - because the Qur'ān has been revealed in that language and idiom. Learning Arabic literature on that level is incumbent on Muslims.

Reading Poets from Jāhiliyyah is Permissible, Even if Full of Pagan Absurdities

This also tells us that, in order to understand the Qur'ān and to understand the Arabic language and its usage during the period of Jāhiliyyah, it is permissible to read and teach the poetry of that period. Though, it is obvious that such poetry will be full of pagan themes and customs highlighting pagan sayings and doings counter to Islam. But, such was the need to understand the Qur'ān that reading and teaching it was declared to be permissible.

Even the Punishment of the World is Mercy in Disguise

In the verses cited above, after having mentioned various punishments which could seize disbelievers within this world, it was said in the end: فَاِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (So, indeed your Lord is Very Kind, Very Merciful). First of all, by using the word: رَبّ (*Rabb:* Lord) here, the hint given is that all these punishments which overtake human beings in this world are there to warn them as part of the dictates of Divine mercy. After that, by introducing the word: رَءُوْف (*Ra'ūf:* Kind) headed by the intensifying particle *lam* (لام) that is, the *lam* of *ta'kīd*), and thus by placing stress on the fact that Allah Ta'ālā was Very Kind and Very Merciful, the hint given was that warnings sent during the life of the world were, in reality, called for by His intrinsic Kindness and Mercy so that heedless men and women would learn from the warning and correct their deeds (before comes 'the last spasm of mass extinction' they themselves are talking about at the closing of the twentieth century, but are still not ready to learn, believe and correct).

Verses 48 - 57

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اِلٰى مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ شَىْءٍ يَّتَفَيَّؤُا ظِلٰلُهٗ عَنِ الْيَمِيْنِ
وَالشَّمَآئِلِ سُجَّدًا لِّلّٰهِ وَهُمْ دٰخِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَلِلّٰهِ يَسْجُدُ مَا فِى
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ وَّالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ
﴿٤٩﴾ يَخَافُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُوْنَ مَا يُؤْمَرُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَقَالَ اللّٰهُ
لَا تَتَّخِذُوْٓا اِلٰهَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ ۚ اِنَّمَا هُوَ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ۚ فَاِيَّاىَ فَارْهَبُوْنِ ﴿٥١﴾ وَلَهٗ

مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلَهُ الدِّيْنُ وَاصِبًا ؕ اَفَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾
وَمَا بِكُمْ مِّنْ نِّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ اِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَاِلَيْهِ تَجْئَرُوْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾
ثُمَّ اِذَا كَشَفَ الضُّرَّ عَنْكُمْ اِذَا فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْكُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾
لِيَكْفُرُوْا بِمَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُمْ ؕ فَتَمَتَّعُوْا ۫ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَيَجْعَلُوْنَ
لِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ نَصِيْبًا مِّمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ ؕ تَاللّٰهِ لَتُسْئَلُنَّ عَمَّا كُنْتُمْ تَفْتَرُوْنَ
﴿٥٦﴾ وَيَجْعَلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ الْبَنٰتِ سُبْحٰنَهٗ ۙ وَلَهُمْ مَّا يَشْتَهُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾

Have they not observed things Allah has created, their shadows inclining from the right and the left prostrating before Allah, while they are humble? [48] **And to Allah prostrates whatever creature there is in the heavens and in the earth, and the angels, and they show no arrogance.** [49] **They fear their Lord above them and do as they are commanded.** [50]

And Allah has said, "Do not take to yourselves two gods. He is but One God. So, Me alone you fear." [51] **And to Him belongs what is in the heavens and the earth and it is only He who deserves obedience as due. Would you, then, fear someone other than Allah?** [52] **And whatever blessing you have is from Allah. Then, once you are touched by distress, to Him alone you cry for help.** [53] **Then, as soon as He removes the distress from you, a group from among you starts ascribing partners to their Lord.** [54] **Thus, they reject what We have given to them. So, enjoy yourself and soon you will come to know.** [55]

They allocate a share from what We have given to them for those (the idols) they know nothing about. By Allah, you shall definitely be questioned about what you have been fabricating. [56] **And they ascribe daughters to Allah - Pure is He - and for themselves, what they desire!** [57]

Verses 58 - 60

وَاِذَا بُشِّرَ اَحَدُهُمْ بِالْاُنْثٰى ظَلَّ وَجْهُهٗ مُسْوَدًّا وَّهُوَ كَظِيْمٌ ﴿٥٨﴾
يَتَوَارٰى مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوْٓءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهٖ ؕ اَيُمْسِكُهٗ عَلٰى هُوْنٍ اَمْ يَدُسُّهٗ

فِى التُّرَابِ ؕ اَلَا سَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ
مَثَلُ السَّوْءِ ۚ وَلِلّٰهِ الْمَثَلُ الْاَعْلٰى ؕ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٦٠﴾ ع

And when one of them is given the good news of a female child, his face becomes gloomy and he is choked with grief. [58] **He hides from people because of the (self-presumed) evil of the good news given to him (wondering): Shall he keep it despite the disgrace or put it away into the dust? Beware, evil is what they decide.** [59] **Those who do not believe in the Hereafter have evil attributes, and to Allah belong the most exalted attributes. And He is the Mighty, the Wise.** [60]

Commentary

In these verses, two peculiar traits of the disbelievers of Arabia have been censured. To begin with, they would take the birth of a baby girl to be so bad that they would go about hiding from people to avoid being disgraced before them. This predicament would then throw them into a fix as to what they should do about it. Should they swallow their pride, embrace the disgrace of becoming the father of a baby girl and resign to the disaster with patience, or just ditch it alive into the dust and get rid of it? Then, on top of it, they had turned so irrational that the child they did not like to have as their own, that they would be audacious enough to attribute to Allah Almighty by declaring that the angels were His daughters!

The sense of the sentence: اَلَا سَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُوْنَ (Beware evil is what they decide) appearing at the end of the second verse (59) actually incorporates these very two traits, as it has been pointed out in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ with reference to Ibn 'Aṭiyyah. It means: (1) That their decision to take girls to be a punishment and a disgrace is by itself an evil decision; and (2) that the thing they would consider a matter of disgrace for their own selves, they would be too ready to attribute to Allah Taʿālā.

Also at the end of the third verse (60), in: وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ (And He is the Mighty, the Wise), there is a hint that taking the birth of a baby girl to be nuisance and disgrace, and hiding from people because of it, amount to challenging Divine wisdom - as the creation of male and female among the created is the very requisite of wisdom. (Rūḥ al-Bayān)

Ruling:

Clear indications are visible in these verses that taking the birth of a girl in the family to be a disaster or disgrace is not permissible under Islam. This is done by disbelievers. Quoting Shir'ah (شرعه) Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān also says that a Muslim should be happier at the birth of a girl in the family so that it becomes a refutation of the act of the people of Jahiliyyah. Says a Ḥadīth: Blessed is the woman who gives birth to a girl in her first pregnancy. That the Arabic word: إناث (*ināth*: females) has been made to precede the word for 'males' in the verse of the Qur'ān: إِنَاثًا وَّيَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ الذُّكُوْرَ (He bestows on whomsoever He wills females and bestows on whomsoever He wills males - 42:49) indicates that the birth of a girl from the first pregnancy is better.

In another Ḥadīth, it is said: Whoever finds any of such girls entrusted to his care, and he treats them fairly and favourably, then, these girls will stand as a curtain between him and Hell. (Rūḥ al-Bayān)

To sum up, it can be said that taking the birth of a girl to be bad is a detestable custom of the pagan period. Muslims must abstain from it. In fact, they should be pleased and satisfied with the promise of Allah against it. Allah knows best.

Verses 61 -65

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللّٰهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِمْ مَّا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ وَّ لٰكِنْ
يُّؤَخِّرُهُمْ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ سَاعَةً وَّلَا
يَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَيَجْعَلُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ مَا يَكْرَهُوْنَ وَ تَصِفُ اَلْسِنَتُهُمُ
الْكَذِبَ اَنَّ لَهُمُ الْحُسْنٰى ۭ لَا جَرَمَ اَنَّ لَهُمُ النَّارَ وَاَنَّهُمْ مُّفْرَطُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾
تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلٰٓى اُمَمٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُوَ
وَلِيُّهُمُ الْيَوْمَ وَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَمَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ اِلَّا
لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِى اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ ۙ وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾
وَاللّٰهُ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۭ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ

لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوۡمٍ يَّسۡمَعُوۡنَ ﴿٦٥﴾

And if Allah were to seize the people for their transgression, He would have spared no creature on earth, but He lets them go on upto an appointed time. So, when their time will come, they will not be late for a moment, nor will they be early. [61]

And they assign to Allah what they themselves dislike and their tongues make the false statement that all good is for them. No, it is inevitable that the Fire is for them and that they will be moved fast (towards it). [62] **By Allah, We sent (messengers) to communities before you but the Satan made their deeds look good to them. So, he is their patron today and for them there is a painful punishment.** [63] **And We did not send down the Book to you but in order that you may explain to them what they differed about, and (that it be) guidance and mercy for a people who believe.** [64]

And Allah sent down water from the heavens and revived the land with it after it was dead. Surely, in that there is a sign for a people who listen. [65]

Verse 66

وَاِنَّ لَكُمۡ فِى الۡاَنۡعَامِ لَعِبۡرَةً ؕ نُسۡقِيۡكُمۡ مِّمَّا فِىۡ بُطُوۡنِهٖ مِنۡۢ بَيۡنِ فَرۡثٍ وَّدَمٍ لَّبَنًا خَالِصًا سَآئِغًا لِّلشّٰرِبِيۡنَ ﴿٦٦﴾

And surely for you, there is a lesson in cattle. We provide you, out of what there is in their bellies, from between feces and blood, the drink of milk, pure and pleasant for those who drink. [66]

Commentary

The pronoun in: بُطُوۡنِهٖ (*buṭūnihi*: their bellies) reverts back to: الاَنۡعَام (*al-an'ām*: cattle). Since the word *al-an'ām* is plural in the feminine gender, it required that the word used for it should have been: بُطُوۡنِهَا (*buṭūniha*), as it appears in Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn: نُسۡقِيۡكُمۡ مِّمَّا فِىۡ بُطُوۡنِهَا (We provide you, out of what there is in their bellies - 23:21).

Al-Qurṭubī explains this by saying that consideration has been made of the meaning of the plural in Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn where the pronoun

has been used in the feminine gender. And, in Sūrah Al-Naḥl, the pronoun has been used in the masculine gender in consideration of the plural word as such. Examples of this usage abound in Arabic where a singular pronoun is made to revert to a plural word.

As for bringing out pure milk from between feces and blood, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said: When the fodder eaten by an animal settles in its stomach, the stomach heats it up as a result of which the waste by-product from the fodder settles down leaving milk above with blood being on top of it. Then, nature has entrusted the next job with the liver. It separates the three and directs them to where they belong. Blood goes to veins. Milk goes to the udder of the animal. Now, left in the stomach is waste which is excreted as feces or dung.

Rulings

1. From this verse we learn that eating good food is not against Zuhd (the way of life marked by not inclining towards worldly enjoyments for the sake of maintaining an ideal state of spiritual purity) specially when it has been acquired with Ḥalāl (lawful) means and provided that no extravagance has been made in it. This is as stated by Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. (Al-Qurṭubī)

2. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: When you eat something, say:

اَللّٰهُمَّ بَارِكْ لَنَا فِيْهِ وَاَطْعِمْنَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ

Yā Allah, bless it for us and have us eat better than it.

And he said: When you drink milk, say:

اَللّٰهُمَّ بَارِكْ لَنَا فِيْهِ وَزِدْنَا مِنْهُ

Yā Allah, bless it for us and give us more of it.

In the second prayer, he did not ask for something 'better than it' (as in the first prayer) for, in human cuisine, there is no nutrient better than milk. Therefore, nature has made milk the very first food given to every man and animal through breast-feeding by mothers. (Al-Qurṭubī)

Verse 67

وَمِنْ ثَمَرٰتِ النَّخِيْلِ وَالْاَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُوْنَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَّرِزْقًا حَسَنًا ۭ اِنَّ

فِى ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾

And from the fruits of date-palms and grape-vines, you obtain intoxicants, and good provision. Surely, in that there is a sign for a people who understand. [67]

Commentary

Described in the previous verses were blessings of Allah Taʿālā which manifest the stunning marvel of Divine power and creativity. Of these, the first to be mentioned was milk which nature has gifted human beings with after having made it go through its own processing in the bellies of animals separating it from feces and blood and delivering it as a finished product, pure and pleasant, food and drink in one. No subsequent human effort or artifice is needed here. Therefore, the word used in the text is: نُسْقِيْكُمْ (*nusqīkum*: We provided you with milk to drink). The stress is self-explanatory.

After that it was said that human beings do make things from some fruits of the date-palms and grape-vines as well, which serve them as food, and other benefits. The hint ingrained here is that there is some intervening role played by human ingenuity, innovation and artifice in making the fruits from date-palms and grape-vines yield what they eat or benefit from in other ways. As a result of the factor of intervention, two kinds of things were made. The first is what intoxicates, the common form of which is liquor. The second is: Rizq Ḥasan, that is, good provision, like dates and grapes which everyone is welcome to use as fresh food, or dry it and store it for later use. The purpose is that Allah Taʿālā, in His perfect power, has given to human beings fruits like dates and grapes, and alongwith it, He also gave human beings the choice to make things they eat and drink out of them. Now the option is theirs. Let them make what they would: Make what intoxicates and knocks their reason out, or make food out of them and get strength and energy!

According to this *tafsīr*, this verse cannot be used to prove the lawfulness of that which intoxicates, that is, liquor. This is because the purpose here is to state the nature of Divine blessings and the different forms they could take when used. It goes without saying that these remain the Divine blessings they are under all conditions. Take the example of foods, drinks and many things of benefit. People use them.

Some also use them in ways which are not permissible. But, the incidence of someone using things wrongfully would not stop a blessing from remaining the blessing it is. Therefore, this is no place to go into details as to which of the uses is lawful and which is otherwise and unlawful. Nevertheless, not to be missed here is the delicate hint given by setting up *"rizq ḥasan"* (good provision) in contrast with *"sakar"* (intoxicant) which tells us that *"sakar"* is not a good provision. According to the majority* of commentators, *"sakar"* means what intoxicates. (Rūḥ al-Maʿānī, Qurṭubī, Jaṣṣāṣ)

These verses are Makkī by consensus. As for the unlawfulness of liquor, it came after that in Madīnah. Though liquor was lawful at the time of the revelation of this verse and Muslims used to drink openly, yet, even at that time, a hint was given in this verse towards the fact that drinking of liquor was not good. After that, came the specific injunctions of the Qur'ān which made liquor *ḥarām* (unlawful) clearly, emphatically and categorically. (Condensed from Al-Jaṣṣāṣ and Al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 68 -69

وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ
وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ ثُمَّ كُلِي مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ فَاسْلُكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ
ذُلُلًا ۚ يَخْرُجُ مِن بُطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ ۗ
إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

And your Lord revealed to the honey bee: "Make homes in the mountains, in the trees and in the structures they raise. [68] **Then, eat from all the fruits and go along the pathways of your Lord made easy for you." From their bellies comes out a drink of various colours in which there is cure for people. Surely, in that there is a sign for a people who ponder.** [69]

Commentary

The first word: أَوْحَىٰ (*awḥā*) in the first sentence of verse 68 has not

* Some 'Ulamā' have also taken it to mean vinegar, or non-intoxicating wine (*nabīdh*) [Jaṣṣāṣ & Qurṭubī] but it is not necessary to report details about this element of difference.

been used here in its technical sense of Waḥy or Revelation. Instead, it appears here in its literal sense which happens when the speaker communicates to the addressee something particular, secretly, in a way that the other person remains unable to understand that which has been communicated. Hence, its translation as 'revealed' is also in a literal sense.

As for the next word: النَّحْل (*an-naḥl*), it is well-established that the honey bee is a distinct entity among non-human life forms particularly in terms of its intelligence and management. Therefore, the way it has been addressed by Allah Ta'ālā shows a distinct elegance of its own. For the rest of the creation, particularly for life forms in the animal and insect kingdom, it was said: اَعْطٰى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدٰى (He gave everything its form, then provided it with guidance - Ṭaḥā, 20:50), something stated as a universal law for all of them. But, for this tiny creature, it was specially said: اَوْحٰى رَبُّكَ (And your Lord revealed) which has been designed to indicate that it has a prominent status among other life forms by virtue of its intelligence, sense and functional insight.

The intelligence of the honey bees can be gauged fairly well by their system of governance. The system of this tiny flier's life operates on the principles of human politics and government. All management rests with one big bee which is the ruling head of all bees. It is her managerial skill and effecient distribution of work which helps run the whole system soundly and safely. Certainly so unique is her system and so established are its rules and regulations that human mind has but to marvel at the phenomena of the bee. This 'queen' itself lays six to twelve thousand eggs in a period of three weeks. By its size, physique and demeanor, it is distinguishable from other bees. This 'queen', following the principle of division of labour, appoints its subjects to handle different matters. Some of them serve on guard duty and do not allow some unknown outsider to enter into the hive. Some stand to protect eggs. Some nurture and train baby bees. Some serve as architects and engineers. The compartments of most roofs made by them range between twenty to thirty thousand. Some bees collect and deliver wax to architects which build homes. They procure this wax material from a whitish powder settled upon vegetation. This material is commonly visible on sugarcane. Some of them sit on different kinds of fruits and flowers and suck their juices which turns into honey while in their bellies. This honey is their

food and the food of their children. And the same is, for all of us too, the essence of taste and nutrition, and the prescription of medicine and remedy.

These different parties discharge their assigned duties very enthusiastically and obey the command of their 'queen' most obediently. If one of them happens to perch on filth, the guards of the hive stop the unwary worker on the outside gate and the 'queen' kills it. One can only wonder about this system and the performance of its managers and workers. (Al-Jawāhir)

The first instruction given through: أَوۡحَىٰ رَبُّكَ (your Lord revealed) appears in the next sentence: أَنِ اتَّخِذِىۡ مِنَ الۡجِبَالِ بُيُوۡتًا (Make homes in the mountains) which mentions the making of homes. At this point, it is worth noting that every animal makes some sort of a sheltered arrangement to live anyway, then, why is it that bees have been particularly commanded to build 'homes' and that too with such considered attention? Furthermore, the word used here is that of: بُيُوۡت *(buyūt)* which is generally used for the places where human beings live, their homes. By doing this two hints have been given. The first hint is towards the fact: Since bees have to prepare honey, therefore, they should first make a safe home. The second hint is toward another fact: The homes they make will not be like the homes of common animals, instead, their design and construction will be extraordinary. As such, their homes are highly distinct, far different from those of other animals, virtually mind-boggling. Their homes are hexagonal in shape. Measuring them with a pair of compasses and rulers will hardly spell out a difference. Other than the hexagonal shape, they never choose any shape such as that of a square, pentagon or any others as some of their corners turn out to be functionally useless.

Allah Taʿālā did not simply order the bees to make homes, He also told them as to where they should be located, that is, it should be at some altitude because such places help provide fresh, clean and almost-filtered air flow for the production of honey. Thus, honey stays protected from polluted air as well as from incidences of breakage or damage to the hives. So, it was said: مِنَ الۡجِبَالِ بُيُوۡتًا وَّمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعۡرِشُوۡنَ (Make homes in the mountains, in the trees and in the structures they raise) so that honey could be prepared in a hygienically safe way. This was the first instruction.

The second instruction appears in: ثُمَّ كُلِى مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ (Then, eat from all the fruits) where the bee is being commanded to suck juices from fruits and flowers as it desires and likes. No doubt, what is said here is: مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ (from all the fruits). But, obviously, the word: كُلّ (*kull*) used here does not mean the fruits and flowers of the whole world. Instead of that, it means those within easy reach, and which serve the desired purpose. This word: كُلّ (*kull*) has also appeared in relation to the event concerning the queen of Saba' where it was said: وَأُوتِيَتْ مِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (she has got everything - An-Naml, 27:23). It is obvious that 'all' or 'every' in this sense do not denote totality without exception to the limit that the queen of Saba' be required to have a personal aeroplane, Rolls Royce and palace train! What is meant here is what she needed to have as complement to her function as the ruler of the time. So, here too, the expression: مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ (from all the fruits) means nothing but this. As for the bee sucking juices from fruits and flowers, it can be said that the molecular composition of juices she sucks is extremely refined and precious, the extraction of which in identical measure through mechanical means even in our advanced scientific age cannot be accomplished as efficiently.

Then comes the third instruction: فَاسْلُكِى سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلاً (and go along the pathways of your Lord made easy for you). When the bee goes to suck juices from fruits and flowers to places far away from home, then, obviously enough, its return to home base should have been difficult. But, Allah Ta'ālā has made flight routes easy for it. Thus, it goes miles away and returns home without straying or getting lost. Allah Ta'ālā has made for it flying routes in the air because in going by the circuitous pathways on land, there is the likelihood of going astray. So, it can be said that Allah Ta'ālā has subjugated the air space for this humble bee so that it can go home without any let or hinderance.

After that, the real outcome of this revealed command was stated in the following words: يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بُطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَآءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ (From their bellies comes out a drink of various colours in which there is cure for people - 69). The difference in colour is caused by the difference of climate and by what they suck from. This is the reason why a particular area with abundance of particular kinds of fruits and flowers does leave its effect and taste on the honey produced in that area. Since honey comes in the form of a liquid substance, therefore, it was called '*sharāb*' (drink). Even in this sentence, present there is a decisive proof of the Oneness

and Power of Allah Ta'ālā. Is it not that this tasty and blissful drink comes out from the belly of a tiny animal which, in itself, is armed with poison? The emergence of antidote from poison is really a unique exhibit of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. Then, such is the staggering working of nature that milk from milch animals does not turn red or yellow under the effect of different climates and foods while honey from the bee does take different colours.

As for the oft-quoted statement: فِيهِ شِفَآءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ (in which there is cure for people), it can be said that honey is, on the one hand, an energy-giving food as well as a delicacy in terms of taste and flavor, while on the other hand, it serves as a remedial prescription for diseases too. And why not? This delicate mobile machine which goes about extracting pure and powerful essences from all kinds of fruits and flowers after which it returns home to store them in its safe compartments specially designed, constructed and guarded for a purpose. Now, if natural herbs and plants contain ingredients which have medicinal and curative properties, why would everything disappear from their essences? Honey is used as medicine directly in phelegmatic diseases while in other diseases it is recommended in combination with other ingredients. Expert physicians in the Greco-Arab medical tradition include it specially as a binder in their medicinal electuaries. Another property of honey is that it does not get spoiled itself and, on top of it, it helps preserve other things as well for a long time. This is the reason why eastern physicians have been using it as an alternate of alcohol for thousands of years. Honey is laxative and proves effecient in expelling unhealthy substances from the stomach.

A Ṣaḥābī mentioned the sickness of his brother before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He advised him to give his brother a drink of honey. He returned the next day and reported that his brother was still sick. He repeated his advice. On the third day, when he again said that there was no change in his condition, he said: صَدَقَ اللّٰهُ وَكَذَبَ بَطْنُ اَخِيْكَ (The word of Allah is true. The stomach of your brother is a liar). The sense was that there is nothing wrong with the suggested remedy. It was the particular temperamental condition which had caused delay in the actual effect of the remedy. When the treatment with honey was repeated after that, the patient got well.

At this place in the Holy Qur'ān, the word: شِفَآءٌ (*shifā'*: remedy, cure, bliss) appears as common noun (*nakirah*) in the context of an affirmative sentence. That it is *shifā'* for every disease is not apparent on this basis.

But, the nunnation (*tanwin*) of *'shifa'* which carries the sense of greatness does necessarily prove that the *shifa'* in honey is of a great and distinct nature. Then there are those spiritually valiant servants of Allah who just have no doubt about honey being a cure for any disease whatsoever. So firmly convinced they are with their staunch belief in the very outward meaning of this statement of their Rabb that they would treat an abscess or an eye with honey, not to mention other diseases of the body. According to reports about Sayyidna Ibn 'Umar ﵁, even if an abscess showed up on his body, he would treat it by applying honey on it. When some of the people asked him as to why would he do that, he said in reply: Is it not that Allah Ta'ala has said about it in the Holy Qur'an: فِيهِ شِفَآءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ (In it, there is cure for people). (Al-Qurṭubi)

Allah Ta'ala deals with His servants in harmony with the belief they have about their Rabb. It was said in Ḥadith Qudsi*:

أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِى بِى

I am with the belief of My servant in Me.

In the last sentence of verse 69: إِنَّ فِى ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (Surely, in that there is a sign for a people who ponder), Allah Ta'ala has, after having given examples of His perfect power mentioned above, invited human beings once again to look into them and think about them. Allah Ta'ala, by causing rains to come down, gives new life to dead lands. Winding through the impurities of feces and blood, He makes pipelines of pure and pleasant milk flow for you. On date-palms and grape-vines, He grows sweet fruits from which you make all sorts of syrups and preserves. Through a tiny little living creature with a poisonous bite, He provides for you what is an excellent combination of food, drink, taste, flavor, and cure.

Would you still keep calling gods and goddesses of your making? Would your worship and fidelity still remain detached from your real Creator and Master and attached to lifeless idols of stone and wood? Would your reason still keep looking for escape from truth by suggesting that this whole phenomena is some charismatic working of blind, deaf and inert matter? Face truth, think, realize. These countless master-

---

* Al-Ḥadith Al-Qudsi: The Sanctified Ḥadith: A technical term for what has been communicated to the Holy Prophet ﷺ by his Rabb. Its meanings are from Allah which He reveals for His Rasul, through inspiration or dream, while its words are from the Rasul of Allah ﷺ.

pieces of Divine creativity, marvels of wisdom and design, and the finest of decisions based on absolute intelligence are the loudest of heralds announcing that our Creator is One, unique and wise, sole object of worship, obedience and fidelity. He alone is the remover par excellence of all difficulties and He alone deserves gratitude and glorification as due.

Special Notes

1. The verse tells us that, beside human beings, there is consciousness and intelligence in other living creatures too: وَإِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ (There is nothing which does not recite His praises - Al-Isrā', 17:44). However, the degrees of intelligence are different. The intelligence of human beings is more perfect than those of any other living creatures. This is the reason why they have been obligated with the precepts and injunctions of the Sharī'ah. Again, this is the reason why a man or woman who does not remain rational due to insanity, does not remain so obligated very much like other creatures.

2. Another distinction of the honey bee is that the Ḥadīth mentions its superiority. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

اَلذُّبَّانُ كُلُّهَا فِى النَّارِ يَجْعَلُهَا عَذَابًا لِأَهْلِ النَّارِ اِلاَّ النَّحْلَ

> All bees will go to Hell (like other hurting creatures). They will be made a punishment for the people of Hell, except the honey bee (which will not go to Hell) - (Nawadir al-Uṣūl with reference to Al-Qurṭubī)

According to another Ḥadīth, he has prohibited its killing - Abū Dāwūd.

3. Traditional physicians doubt that honey is the excretion or saliva of the bee. Aristotle had placed bees in a hive made of glass and had closed it. He wished to find out their working system. But, these bees first mounted a curtain made with wax and mud on the inner side of the glass cage and did not start their work until such time that they became certain of having become totally veiled from sight.

Giving an example of the lowness of worldly life, Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ said:

اَشْرَفُ لِبَاسِ بَنِىْ اٰدَمَ فِيْهِ لُعَابُ دُوْدَةٍ وَّاَشْرَفُ شَرَابِهٖ رَجِيْعُ نَحْلَةٍ

> The finest dress of the progeny of Adam is saliva from a tiny insect and the finest of his drinks is the excrement of a bee.

4. From the statement: فِيهِ شِفَآءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ (in which, there is cure for people) we also find out that treating diseases with medicine is permissible because Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned it as a reward and blessing.

Elsewhere it has been said: وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ مَاهُوَ شِفَآءٌ وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (And We send down from the Qur'ān what is cure and mercy for believers - Al-Isrā', 17:82). Ḥadīth induces people to go for treament of diseases and use medicines. Some Companions asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: Should we use medicine? He said: Why not? Do take advantage of treatment because for every disease Allah has created, He has also created a matching medicine. But, there is no cure for one disease. They asked: Which disease is that? He said: Extreme old age. (Abū Dāwūd & Tirmidhī from Al-Qurṭubī)

There is yet another narration from Sayyidnā Khuzaymah ؓ. He says: Once I asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the practice of blowing on the sick and seeking to cast off diseases which we are used to, or treat ourselves with medicines are the kind of arrangements we make to stay safe against diseases. Can these change the destiny determined by Allah Ta'ālā? He said: These too are nothing but the very forms of Divinely-appointed destiny.

To sum up, there is consensus of all 'Ulamā' on the justification of seeking treatment and using medicine. Many Aḥādīth and reports from the Ṣaḥābah are available in support. If one of the children of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ؓ was stung by a scorpion, he would give him an antidote and seek to help the child to get well through the benediction of supplicatory recitations. He treated a person suffering from partial paralysis by branding. (Al-Qurṭubī)

It has been reported about some Muslim mystics (Sūfiyā') that they did not like being medically treated. This is also evident from the reported behaviour of some of the Ṣaḥābah as well. For instance, according to a report, Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ fell sick. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ came to visit him and asked him: What is it that ails you? He replied: I am worried about my sins. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ said: Then, do you wish to have something? He said: I wish to have the mercy of my Rabb. Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ؓ said: If you like I can call a physician? The answer he gave was: Believe me, it is the 'Physician' Himself who has put

me down (on the sick bed).

But, occurances of this nature do not go to prove that these blessed souls took medical treatment to be reprehensible (*makrūh*). May be, at that time, it was not upto their personal taste and inclination. Therefore, it was because of their inability to accept it temperamentally that they did not favour to go by it. This is a transitory phase of psyche when one comes under the overwhelming logic and effect of the state one is in, and which cannot be used as an argument to prove that medical treatment is either impermissible or reprehensible. The very request made to Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ by Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ﷺ that he be allowed to bring a physician for him is, in itself, a proof of the fact that treatment is permissible - rather, there are situations when doing so becomes mandatory as well.

Verse 70

وَاللّٰهُ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ ۙ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّرَدُّ اِلٰٓى اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْ
لَا يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْـًٔا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٧٠﴾

And Allah created you, then He takes you back. And there are some among you who are carried back to the worst part of the age, that he knows nothing after having knowledge. Surely, wherein Allah is All-Knowing, All-Powerful. [70]

Commentary

Mentioned previously were various states of water, vegetation, cattle and honey bee through which Allah Ta'ālā had reminded human beings of His perfect power of creation and of His blessings for the created. Now, through the words of the present verse, they have been invited to ponder over the very state they are in. Human beings were nothing. Allah Ta'ālā blessed them with existence. Then, by sending death when He willed, He terminated that blessing. As for some others, they are, much before their death, carried to such an stage of extreme old age that their senses do not work, they lose the strength of their hands and feet. They understand nothing, nor can they remember what they do. This change in their world-view and self-view proves that knowledge and

power reside in the exclusive domain of the One who is the Creator and Master.

The expression مِنكُم مَّن يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ (and there are some among you who are carried back to the worst part of the age) gives a hint that man has seen a time of weakness earlier too. This was the early stage of childhood marked by its lack of understanding and physical strength, and dependence on others in eating, drinking, getting up and sitting down. Then came youth, the time to prosper and move ahead. Then, gradually, man is carried to a stage of the same age of helplessness as it was in early childhood.

The expression: أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ (translated as 'the worst part of the age') means the extreme old age when all physical and mental faculties become weak and confused. The Holy Prophet ﷺ always prayed:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّیٓ اَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنْ سُوْءِ الْعُمُرِ مِّنْ اَنْ اُرَدَّ اِلٰی اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ

'O Allah, I seek refuge with You from the evil of age' -

and according to another narration:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّیٓ اَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنْ اَنْ اُرَدَّ اِلٰی اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ

'O Allah, I seek refuge with you from that I be carried to the worst part of the age.'

The definition of: أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ (the worst part of the age) remains undetermined. However, the definition appearing above seems to be weightier, something to which the Qur'ān too has alluded by saying: لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا (that he knows nothing after having knowledge) that is, the age in which he is in, senses do not remain active as a result of which a person forgets everything he knows.

This 'worst part of the age' (أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ) has been defined variously. Some say it is the age of eighty years while some others say it is ninety. Also reported from Sayyidnā 'Ali ؓ, there is a statement which puts it at seventy five. (Ṣaḥīḥayn as quoted by Maẓharī)

After that appears the tersely-phrased sentence also mentioned above: لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا (that he knows nothing after having knowledge). This is about the phenomena of old age (which, in our time, has given birth to the study of grontology). When one is made to reach its extreme stage, one is left with no functional strength, neither physical nor rational. What he knows now, he may not know moments later. All information he has, he may forget and become like a child born

yesterday who has no knowledge or awareness or understanding or intelligence. Ḥaḍrat 'Ikrimah رحمه الله تعالى says: 'This state will not prevail upon the reciter of the Qur'ān.'

In the last sentence of the verse, it was said: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ قَدِيْرٌ (Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Powerful). It means that from knowledge He knows everyone's age, and from power He does what He wills. If He wills, He can have a strong youngman be overtaken by the signs of the worst part of old age, and should He so will, even a hundred-year old aged man could remain a strong youngman. All this lies within the power of that sole Being in whose divinity there is no partner or associate.

Verse 71

وَاللّٰهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ فِى الرِّزْقِ ۚ فَمَا الَّذِيْنَ فُضِّلُوْا بِرَآدِّىْ رِزْقِهِمْ عَلٰى مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيْهِ سَوَآءٌ ؕ اَفَبِنِعْمَةِ اللّٰهِ يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾

And Allah has given some of you preference over others in provision. So, those given preference are not to pass on their provision to their slaves so that they become equal in it: Do they, then, reject the blessing of Allah? [71]

Commentary

In the previous verses, by referring to major manifestations of His knowledge and power and blessings which descend on human beings, Allah Ta'ālā has the natural proof of His Oneness (Tauḥīd). By looking at it, even a person of ordinary commonsense would not accept that any created being can hold a share with Allah Ta'ālā in His attributes of knowledge and power, or in any of the others. In the present verse, this very subject of Tauḥīd has been brought into focus by citing the example of a case in mutual dealing.

It is being said here that Allah Ta'ālā has not, in His infinite wisdom, and in view of His consideration for human good, made all human beings equals in terms of *rizq* or provision. Instead, He has given some of them preference over some others establishing different degrees therein. Someone was made so rich that he owns a lot of things, keeps a staff of

all sorts of servers, spends as he wishes, and his servers too benefit through him. Then, someone was made to work for others who, far from spending on others, was cut out to receive his own expenditure from others. Then, someone was made to be somewhere in the middle, neither so rich as to spend on others, nor so poor and needy as to be dependent upon others even in the necessities of life.

Everyone is aware of the outcome of this natural distribution that he who was given preference in provision and made rich and need-free would never accept to distribute his wealth among his slaves and servants in a way that they too become his equals in wealth.

Understand the drive of this argument by applying this example on polytheists. They too accept that the idols and other created things they worship are, after all, created and owned by Allah Ta'ālā. If so, how can they suggest that the created and the owned become equals to their Creator and Master? Do such people see all these signs and hear all these words, yet go on to ascribe partners and equals to Allah, the necessary result of which is that thay reject the blessings given by Allah? Because, if they had admitted that all these blessings have been given by Allah Ta'ālā without the intervention of any self-carved idol, icon, human being and Jinn, then, how could they have equated these things with Allah Ta'ālā?

The same subject has been taken up in the following verse of Sūrah Ar-Rūm:

ضَرَبَ لَكُمْ مَّثَلاً مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ هَلْ لَّكُمْ مِّنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَآءَ فِىْ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ فَاَنْتُمْ فِيْهِ سَوَآءٌ

> We have given for you an example from your own people. Have those who are your subjects become sharers with you in the provision given to you by Us whereby you are equal in it? (30:28)

The outcome of this too is: When you do not like to let your servants and your slaves whom you own become equal to yourself, how can you like for Allah that He, and things created and owned by Him, become equal to Him?

The Difference in Degrees of Economic Status is Mercy for Mankind

This verse makes it clear that the presence of different degrees of eco-

nomic status among human beings - that someone is poor, another rich and yet another somewhere in the middle - is not accidental. It is as dictated by the wisdom of Allah Ta'ālā, as required by considerations for human good, and is mercy for mankind. If this state (of human society) were not to prevail and if all human beings were to become equal in wealth and possessions, it would have caused a breach of function in world order. Therefore, since the time the world became populated, all human beings have never been equal in terms of wealth and property, in any period, or age, nor can they be. Should such an equality were to be created compulsarily, it will take only a few days when disruption and disorder become openly visible throught the entire spectrum of human dealings. Allah Ta'ālā has created human beings with varying degrees of temperaments as conditioned by intelligence, strength and functional ability. They have been further classified as low, high and average, a fact which cannot be rejected by any reasonable person. Similarly, it is also inevitable that there be different degrees in wealth and property as well so that every single person is rewarded in terms of individual capability. If the capable and the incapable were made equal, it will discourage the capable. When the capable person has to stay at par with the incapable in economic pursuits, what other motivation would compel him to go on striving and achieving excellence? The necessary outcome of such an approach will be no other but the demise of excellence acquired through functional capability.

Qur'ānic Injunctions Against Concentration of Wealth

Whereas the Creator of the universe gave preference to some over others in physical and rational faculties, and established variance in provision, wealth and property, subject to it, He has also established a strong system of economic equillibrium which aims that no particular group or party or a few individuals take over the treasures of wealth and centers of economic activity. This system also guards against the consequences of such a takeover which dries up the very field where capable people could thrive by utilizing their physical, intellectual and technical capabilities and advance economically. For this purpose, it was said in the Holy Qur'ān: كَىۡ لَايَكُوۡنَ دُوۡلَةًۢ بَيۡنَ الۡاَغۡنِيَآءِ مِنۡكُمۡ It means: (We made the law of distribution of wealth,) so that wealth does not come to be revolving among the rich from among you - Al-Hashr, 59:7.

The wide-spread turbulance being experienced in the economic systems of the modern world is directly the result of bypassing this wise law given to us by Divine wisdom. On the one hand, there is the capitalist system in which some individuals or groups virtually take over the nerve centers of wealth through the medium of interest and gambling and go on to enslave the entire creation of Allah economically. They are rendered so helpless that they have no escape route left but to serve like slaves and work like dogs in order to get what they can to eke out a living, no matter how miserable. In a situation so sordid, it is a far cry that they would ever be able to step into the field of industry or trade despite having the best of capabilities for this purpose.

As a reaction to this tyranny of capitalists, there rises a counter system in the name of socialism or communism. Their slogan is the removal of disparity between the rich and poor and the creation of equality between all. Masses of people already harassed by the injustices of the capitalist system go after the slogan. But, very soon, they discover that the slogan was nothing but deception. The dream of economic equality never came true. The poor person, despite poverty and hunger, had a certain human dignity, a certain right to do what he wished, but even that human dignity was snatched away by the system. In the communist system, the worth of a human person is no more than a part of its machines. Private ownership of property is simply out of question there. The factory worker owns nothing, not even the spouse and children. Everyone is a part of the state machine. When the machine starts, they have no choice but to start working on their jobs. Other than the so-called objectives of the state, the worker has no conscience or voice. The slightest grievance against the tyranny of the state and that unbearable labour on the job is counted as rebellion against the state the punishment for which is death. In short, hostility towards God and religion and adherence to bland materialism is the basic principle of communism.

These are facts no communist can deny. The writings and doings of their commissars are proofs of this assertion for compiling relevant references to these amounts to making a regular book out of them.

The Holy Qur'ān has provided a system in between the two extremes of tyrannical capitalism and Quixotic communism keeping it free from ex-

cess and deficiency so that no individual or group could, despite there being a naturally placed dissimilarity in provision and wealth, go on to make the creation of Allah at large their slaves only to condemn them to ever rising prices of commodities and virtual famines. By declaring interest and gambling to be unlawful, it has demolished the foundations of illegitimate capitalism. Then, by making a categorical statement that the poor and needy have a right in the wealth of every Muslim, they were admitted as sharers, which is not supposed to be some favour done to them. In fact, it is the fulfillment of a duty. The verse: فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُوْمٌ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَالْمَحْرُوْمِ (in their wealth, there is a known right for the asking and the deprived - Al-Ma'arij, 70:24) proves it. After that, by distributing the entire property of a deceased person over individual inheritors of the family, it has eliminated the concentration of wealth. Natural streams, high seas and the self-growing produce of mountain forests were declared to be the common capital of the entire creation of Allah. No individual or group can take possession over them as something owned by them. This is not permissible. Contrary to this, in a capitalist system, these blessings are handled as something owned by capitalists only (under one or the other pretext).

Since diversity and difference in intellectual and practical capabilities is a natural phenomena, and the pursuit of economic gains through them also depends on these very capabilities, therefore, diversity or dissimilarity in the ownership of wealth and property is also a dictate of wisdom. Whoever has the least sense of how things work in this world would find it hard to deny this truth. Even the champions of the slogan of equality could not go far enough with it. They had to abandon their claim of flat equality and were left with no choice but to introduce dissimilarity and incentive-oriented policy in national economy. On May 5, 1960, speaking before the Supreme Soviet, Nikita Khurshev said:

> 'We are against the movement to eliminate difference in wages. We are openly against the efforts to establish equality in emoluments and to bring them at par. This is the teaching of Lenin. He taught that material motivations will be given full consideration in a socialist society.' (Soviet World, p.346)

That the dream of economic equality had translated itself into its absence since the very early stages, but it did not take much time to witness that this absence of equality and the disparity between the rich and

the poor in the communist state of Russia had gone much beyond the general run of capitalist countries. Lyon Sidov writes:

> 'Perhaps, there is no developed capitalist country where the disparity in the wages of workers is as high as in Soviet Russia.'

These few examples from the contemporary scene show how deniers were themselves compelled to confirm the truth of the verse: وَاللّٰهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ فِى الرِّزْقِ (And Allah has given some of you preference over others in provision - 71) and that (Allah does what He wills). As for comments under this verse, the purpose was limited to pointing out that the dissimilarity in provision and wealth is very natural and very much in accordance with considerations for human good. That which remains is the discussion of the Islamic Principles of Distribution of Wealth and how they distinctly differ from capitalism and communism both. Inshallah, this will appear under comments on: نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَّعِيْشَتَهُمْ (We have distributed among them their livelihood - Al-Zukhruf, 43:32) appearing in Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume VII. An independent treatise on this subject entitled: 'Islam Ka Nizam-e-Taqsim-e-Daulat' written by this humble writer should also be sufficient for this purpose. [This is also available in its Engish translation made by Professor Ḥasan Askarī under the title: DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH IN ISLAM from the publishers, Maktaba-e-Darul-Uloom, Korangi, Karachi, Pakistan]

Verses 72 - 76

وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ
بَنِيْنَ وَحَفَدَةً وَّرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ ؕ اَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ وَبِنِعْمَتِ اللّٰهِ
هُمْ يَكْفُرُوْنَ ﴿۷۲﴾ وَيَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَالَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ رِزْقًا مِّنَ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ شَيْئًا وَّلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ ﴿۷۳﴾ فَلَا تَضْرِبُوْا لِلّٰهِ
الْاَمْثَالَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۷۴﴾ ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا
مَّمْلُوْكًا لَّا يَقْدِرُ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ وَّمَنْ رَّزَقْنٰهُ مِنَّا رِزْقًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ يُنْفِقُ مِنْهُ
سِرًّا وَّجَهْرًا ؕ هَلْ يَسْتَوٗنَ ؕ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ ؕ بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۷۵﴾
وَضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا رَّجُلَيْنِ اَحَدُهُمَآ اَبْكَمُ لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ وَّهُوَ كَلٌّ

عَلٰى مَوْلٰهُ ۙ اَيْنَمَا يُوَجِّهْهُّ لَايَاْتِ بِخَيْرٍ ؕ هَلْ يَسْتَوِىْ هُوَ ۙ وَمَنْ يَّاْمُرُ
بِالْعَدْلِ ۙ وَهُوَ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿۷۶﴾

And Allah has created spouses from among you and created for you from your spouses sons and grandsons, and gave you provision from good things. Is it, then, the falsehood that they believe and the blessing of Allah that they reject? [72]

And they worship besides Allah things which have no power to give them anything from the heavens and the earth, nor can they have (such power). [73]

So, do not coin similarities for Allah. Surely, Allah knows and you do not know. [74]

Allah gives an example: There is a slave owned (by some-one), who has no power over anything, and there is a person whom We have given good provision from Us. And he spends out of it secretly and openly. Are they equal? Praise be to Allah. But, most of them do not know. [75]

And Allah gives an example: There are two men. One of them is dumb who is unable to do anything, and he is a burden on his master. Wherever he directs him to, he brings no good. Does he equal the one who enjoins jus-tice and is on the straight path? [76]

Commentary

In verse 72: جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا (Allah has created spouses from among you), a special blessing has been mentioned in that Allah Taʿālā has created spouses from the same genus so that they remain mutually familiar and their distinction and nobility inherent in the human species also remains stable through generations.

Given here, there may be another hint towards the fact that spouses belong to each other's genus and, as such, their needs and feelings are common to both, therefore, mutual consideration is but necessary for them.

The next sentence of the verse: وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَنِيْنَ وَحَفَدَةً has been translated as: 'and created for you from your spouses sons and grand-sons.'

Though children are born to father and mother both, yet in this verse, their birth has been identified with mothers only. The indication given here is suggestive of the fact that the role of the mother in the birth and the creational formation of the child is more pronounced that that of the father. The father contributes only a lifeless drop. The locale where this drop goes through different kinds of stages from the transformation into human form and shape to becoming alive, and where all these inimitable achievements of nature take place, is a place no other than the womb of the mother. Therefore, in the Ḥadīth, the right of the mother has been made to precede the right of the father.

There is yet another hint visible in this sentence which mentions grandsons alongwith sons, that is, the real purpose behind creating spouses is the procreation and survival of human race so that they have children, then, their children have their children. What else would this be, if not the survival of human species?

After that, by saying: وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ (and gave you provision from good things), mention was made of things which guarantee personal survival. In other words, once a human child is born, food is needed for its personal survival. That too was provided by Allah Taʿālā. The real meaning of the word: حَفَدَةً (*hafadah*) in this verse is that of one who helps and serves. That this word has been used for children suggests that children should always be at the service of their father and mother. (Qurṭubī)

The statement: فَلَا تَضْرِبُوْا لِلّٰهِ الْاَمْثَالَ (So, do not coin similarities for Allah -74) clarifies an important aspect of the reality of things as they relate to Allah. If ignored, it becomes the breeding ground of all sorts of rejectionist doubts and scruples. The problem is that people would generally take Allah Taʿālā on the analogy of their own humankind and go on to declare the highest placed among them, a king and ruler, as similar to Allah Taʿālā. Then, relying on this wrong assumption, they start seeing the Divine system on the analogy of the system of human monarchs. This leads them to take a cue from the fact that since no king can, all by himself, run the administration of the whole kingdom, the system is run by delegating powers to subordinate ministers and officials who do that on his behalf. Similarly, they believe and propose that there have to be some other objects of worship under the authority of Allah Taʿālā who would help Him out in carrying out His tasks. This is the general theory of all

idol-worshipers and polytheists. This sentence of the Qur'ān has cut off the very root of these doubts by stating that suggesting examples of what has been created and applying them on Allah Ta'ālā, the Creator, is something unreasonable by itself. He is far above similarities and analogies and conjectures and guesses.

In the first of the two examples given in the last two verses, the description is that of a master and a slave, that is, the owner and the owned. By giving this example, it is being said: When these two, despite being from the same genus and the same kind, cannot be equal to each other, how then could you equate someone or something created by Allah with Him?

In the second example, there is a man who bids justice and teaches what is good. This is a model of his intellectual perfection. Then he himself takes the path of moderation and right guidance. This is the model of his practical perfection. Set against the power of this intellectually and practically perfect man, there is the other man who cannot do anything for himself nor can he do anything right for others. These two men of two different kinds, despite being from one genus, one species and one brotherhood, cannot be equal to each other. So, how can some created being or thing become equal to the Creator and Master of the universe who is Absolute in Wisdom, Absolute in Power, and All-Knowing and All-Aware?

Verses 77 - 83

وَلِلّٰهِ غَيْبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ وَمَاۤ اَمْرُ السَّاعَةِ اِلَّا كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ
اَوْ هُوَ اَقْرَبُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۷۷﴾ وَاللّٰهُ اَخْرَجَكُمْ مِّنْۢ
بُطُوْنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ شَيْـًٔا ۙ وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَ الْاَبْصَارَ
وَالْاَفْـِٕدَةَ ۙ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۷۸﴾ اَلَمْ يَرَوْا اِلَى الطَّيْرِ مُسَخَّرٰتٍ فِىْ
جَوِّ السَّمَآءِ ؕ مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ
﴿۷۹﴾ وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْۢ بُيُوْتِكُمْ سَكَنًا وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ جُلُوْدِ
الْاَنْعَامِ بُيُوْتًا تَسْتَخِفُّوْنَهَا يَوْمَ ظَعْنِكُمْ وَيَوْمَ اِقَامَتِكُمْ ۙ وَمِنْ اَصْوَافِهَا

وَاَوْبَارِهَا وَاَشْعَارِهَآ اَثَاثًا وَّمَتَاعًا اِلٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿۸۰﴾ وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّمَّا
خَلَقَ ظِلٰلًا وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْجِبَالِ اَكْنَانًا وَّجَعَلَ لَكُمْ سَرَابِيْلَ
تَقِيْكُمُ الْحَرَّ وَسَرَابِيْلَ تَقِيْكُمْ بَاْسَكُمْ ؕ كَذٰلِكَ يُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهٗ عَلَيْكُمْ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿۸۲﴾
يَعْرِفُوْنَ نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُوْنَهَا وَاَكْثَرُهُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿۸۳﴾ ع

And to Allah belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. And the Hour is nothing but like the twinkling of the eye, or even quicker. Of course, Allah is powerful over everything. [77]

And Allah has brought you forth from your mothers' wombs when you knew nothing, and He made for you ears, eyes and hearts, so that you may be grateful. [78]

Did they not look at the birds, subdued, in the atmosphere of the sky? No one holds them but Allah. Surely, in that there are signs for a people who believe. [79]

And Allah has made for you of your houses a place for comfort, and made for you houses from the hides of cattle which you find light the day you travel and the day you camp, and out of their wool and their fur and their hair (He created) household goods and things of enjoyment for a time. [80]

And Allah has made for you shades from what He has created, and made for you shelters in the mountains and made for you shirts which protect you from heat and shirts which protect you in your battles. [81] **This is how He perfects His favour upon you, so that you may submit. If they still turn away, then, your responsibility is only to convey the message clearly.** [82]

They are aware of Allah's favour, yet they deny it. And most of them are ungrateful. [83]

Commentary

The Divine statement: لَاتَعْلَمُوْنَ شَيْئًا (when you knew nothing - 78) indicates that knowledge is not an ingrained personal excellence of man. When born, man has no knowledge or skill. Then, in proportion to growing human needs, man is made to absorb some knowledge, bit by bit, di-

rectly from Allah Taʿālā in which no role is played by the parents or teachers. First of all, man was taught to cry. This one qualification alone provides all he needs at that time. Hungry or thirsty, he cries. Feels hot or cold, he cries. If some other discomfort bothers him, he would still cry. Nature has poured a special kind of love in the hearts of the father and the mother for the needs of the infant, because of which, when they hear the sounds made by the child, they become all too eager to find out what is bothering the baby, and all too willing to remove the problem. If the child was not inducted into this act of crying as part of his or her early education from a side no less than that of Allah Himself, who else could have trained the child to employ this skill and start crying like that as and when there be some need. Alongwith it, Allah Taʿālā also taught the child, inspiration-wise, that he or she should use gums and lips to suck milk, the child's energy food, from the breast of the mother. If this education and training was not natural and direct, no teacher anywhere could dare make this new-born learn to pout and move the mouth right and suck nipples on the breast. Thus, with the increase in the needs of the child, nature took care of teaching its charge directly without the intermediary link of the father and mother, in a manner almost spontaneous and self-regulating. After the passage of some time, the child starts learning a little by hearing parents and others around say what they do, or pick up a few tips by seeing a few things around. This, then, creates in the child the ability to understand sounds heard and things seen.

Therefore, after: لَاتَعْلَمُوْنَ شَيْئًا (when you knew nothing) in the verse under comment, it was said: وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ (and He made for you ears, eyes and hearts). It means: Though, human beings knew nothing about anything at the early stage of their birth, but nature had installed in their very frame of existence novel instruments to fulfill their need to learn. Out of these instruments, the first to be mentioned was '*sam*ʿ', that is, the faculty of hearing which precedes perhaps for the reason that the very first knowledge, and the most of it, comes through nothing but ears. In the beginning, eyes are closed, but ears hear. Furthermore, if we were to think about it, we shall not fail to realize that the amount of information one acquires in a whole life time is mostly what has been heard with ears. Information collected visually is much less than that.

After these two, comes information which one deduces by deliberating into things heard and seen. According to the statements of the Qur'ān, this is a function of the human heart. Therefore, stated at number three is: أفئدة (af'idah) which is the plural of: فؤاد *fu'ād* which means the heart. Scientists identify the human brain as the center of understanding and reason. But, the statement of the Qur'ān tells us that though the brain plays a role in this process of reasoning, yet the real center of knowledge and reason is the heart.

On this occasion, Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned the faculties of hearing, seeing and understanding. Speech was not mentioned because speech plays no role in the acquisition of knowledge. It is, rather, a source of the expression of knowledge. In addition to that, according to Imām Al-Qurṭubī, the word: سَمْع *'sam'*(hearing) is inclusive of نُطق *nuṭq* (speech) as a corollary, as experience bears out that a person who hears speaks as well. A person deprived of the power of speech remains deaf in the ears as well. Perhaps, the reason why a dumb person cannot speak lies in the person's very inability to hear any sounds which could make learning to speak through hearing possible. والله اعلم *Wallāhu a'lam*: 'And Allah knows best' is a standard appendage to conclusions where definite knowledge about a subject in flux is not available or accessible or reliable. For a believer, this serves as a safety device against the possibility of having made any false statements, which may be a sin.

In the statement: وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ بُيُوْتِكُمْ سَكَنًا (And Allah has made for you of your houses a place of comfort - 80), the word: بيوت (*buyūt*) is the plural of *bayt* (بيت) which means a house where night could be spent. Imām Al-Qurṭubī says in his Tafsīr:

كُلُّ مَا عَلَاكَ فَاَظَلَّكَ فَهُوَ سَقفٌ وَّسَمَآءٌ، وَكُلُّ مَآ اَقَلَّكَ فَهُوَ اَرضٌ وَّكُلُّ مَا سَتَرَكَ مِن جِهَاتِكَ الْاَرْبَعِ فَهُوَ جِدَارٌ فَاِذَا انْتَظَمَتْ وَاتَّصَلَتْ فَهُوَ بَيْتٌ

'Whatever is above your head and provides shade for you is roof or sky, and whatever holds you atop is earth, and whatever screens you out from all four sides are walls, and when (all these components are) put together properly, that is a house.

The real purpose of making a house is to have peace for body and heart

Here, by calling the human house a place of comfort and peace Allah Ta'ālā has made the logic and wisdom of making houses fully evident,

that is, its real purpose is to have comfort of the body and peace of the heart. Customarily, the avenues of human work lie outside houses. Human work owes its existence to human movement and struggle. The real purpose of one's house is to go there, when tired after moving around and doing things, and rest and enjoy peace - even though, there are times when one keeps moving around and doing things in one's own house, but such instances are usually on the lower side.

This help us realize that peace is really the peace of mind and heart, something one finds in one's home only. This also tells us that the highest qualification of human home is that it provides peace. The world of today is at the height of its building craze. Limitless expenditure is incurred on their superficial finishing. But, there are very few homes among them which would provide peace of mind and heart. In fact, the artificially imposed additions in them become the very agents which destroy comfort and peace, and even in the absence of such material extravagance, the kind of people one confronts in the house is a misfortune which sucks that peace away. When such elegant houses are compared with a modest hut, the dweller of the hut who is blessed with comfort and peace for his body and heart is certaintly living in a better place.

The Qur'ān manifests the 'elan vital, the essence and the root of everything. Hence, peace was declared to be the real purpose of human home, and the greatest need indeed. Similarly, the real purpose of marital life was also determined to be peace as in: لِتَسْكُنُوٓا اِلَيْهَا (so that you may enjoy peace with her - 30:21). A married life which fails to achieve this purpose remains deprived of the real benefit destined for it. Life in our day is infested with so many customs and formalities reaching the limits of absurdity in showing what you have through all sorts of artificial veneers. To compound the problem further, the outpourings of Western cultural and social norms and products have provided everything one needs to embellish personl surroundings with artificial decor - but, it has certainly made human beings become all deprived of what would be real comfort for their bodies and peace for their hearts.

The statement: مِنْ جُلُوْدِ الْاَنْعَامِ (from the hides of the cattle - 80) and the statement: مِنْ اَصْوَافِهَا وَاَوْبَارِهَا (out of their wool and their fur and their hair - 80) prove that it is Ḥalāl to use everything out of the hide, wool and hair of animals. Here, even the restriction that the animal be properly

slaughtered or be a dead animal does not exist, nor is there any restriction as to their meat being Ḥalāl or Ḥarām. It is perfectly Ḥalāl to use the hides of the animals of this kind by tanning them, and as for hair and wool, the death of the animal leaves just no effect on them. That remains Ḥalāl and permissible without any specific technical treatment. This is the Madhab (creed) of the great Imām, Abū Ḥanīfah. However, the hide of swine and all parts thereof are unclean and unfit for use under all conditions.

Finally, a note about the statement: سَرَابِيْلَ تَقِيْكُمُ الْحَرَّ (shirts which protect you from heat - 81). Here, protection from heat has been identified as the purpose of a shirt - though, a shirt protects one from heat and cold both. This has been answered by Imām Al-Qurṭubī and other commentators by saying that the Holy Qur'ān has been revealed in the Arabic language, its first addressees are Arabs, therefore, it speaks by taking Arab habits and needs into account. Arabia is a hot country where the very thought of snow and winter chill is far-fetched, therefore, the statement was left with the mention of protection from heat as being sufficient. Yet another explanation for this has been given by Maulānā Ashraf Alī Thanavī in Bayān al-Qur'ān by saying that in the beginning of this Sūrah, the Qur'ān had already said: لَكُمْ فِيْهَا دِفْءٌ (and for you, there is provision against cold in them - 16:5). Thus, it was in view of this earlier mention of beating cold and having warmth that only protection from heat has been mentioned here.

Verses 84 - 89

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيْدًا ثُمَّ لَا يُؤْذَنُ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَلَا هُمْ
يُسْتَعْتَبُوْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَإِذَا رَاَ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوا الْعَذَابَ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ
وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَإِذَا رَا الَّذِيْنَ أَشْرَكُوْا شُرَكَآءَهُمْ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا
هٰٓؤُلَآءِ شُرَكَآؤُنَا الَّذِيْنَ كُنَّا نَدْعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِكَ ۚ فَأَلْقَوْا إِلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلَ
إِنَّكُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَأَلْقَوْا إِلَى اللّٰهِ يَوْمَئِذِ ِالسَّلَمَ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا
كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ زِدْنٰهُمْ
عَذَابًا فَوْقَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوْا يُفْسِدُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِيْ كُلِّ

أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِم مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ ۚ
وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَىٰ
لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾ ع

And (remember) the Day We shall raise up a witness from every people, then the disbelievers will not be allowed (to make excuses) nor shall they be asked to repent. [84]

And when the unjust will see the punishment, it will not be lightened for them, nor will they be given respite. [85]

And when the Mushriks will see those whom they made partners with Allah, they will say: Our Lord, these are the partners we made whom we called in worship besides you. Then, they (the partners) will turn to them saying: You are indeed liars. [86]

And on that day they will tender submission to Allah and lost to them shall be all that they used to fabricate. [87]

Those who disbelieve, and put obstructions in the way of Allah, for them We shall add up punishment after punishment for the mischief they used to make. [88]

And (think of) the day We shall send to every people a witness from among them (to testify) against them, and We shall bring you (O prophet) as witness against these. And We have revealed to you the Book, an exposition of everything, and guidance, and mercy, and glad tidings for the Muslims. [89]

Commentary

In verse 89, by saying: وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ , the Qur'ān has been credited as the exposition of everything. It means everything about the religion because the objective of Divine revelation and Prophetic mission concerns with these very things. Therefore, the very effort to cull out answers to problems pertaining to economic sciences from the Qur'ān is an exercise in error. However, the appearance of some implied hint somewhere there shall not be deemed contrary to this. Now remains the question that the Qur'ān does not carry answers to all problems of the religion itself, how then, would it be correct to say that it is 'an exposition of

everything'?

The answer is that the Qur'ān, does carry the basic principles concerning all problems, and it is in their light that the Aḥādīth of the Rasūl of Allah clarify these problems. Then, there are some details which are delegated to the principles of Ijmā' (consensus) and Al-Qiyās (analogical deduction following the norms set by the Sharī'ah of Islam). This tells us that the religious rulings deduced from the Aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and from Ijmā' and Qiyās are also, in a way, as stated by the Qur'ān itself.

Verse 90

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَائِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ
الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۚ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

Allah commands to do justice and be good, and to give relatives (their due), and forbids from shameless acts, evil deeds and transgression. He exhorts you so that you may be receptive to advice. [90]

Commentary

This is the most comprehesive verse of the Holy Qur'ān where the essence of the entire range of Islamic teachings has been condensed into a few words. Therefore, from the blessed period of the most righteous elders upto this day, the practice has continued that this verse is recited at the end of the special Khuṭbah (address) of Jumu'ah and the two 'Eids ('Eid al-Fiṭr and 'Eid al-Aḍḥā). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ says that the most comprehensive verse of the Holy Qur'ān appears in Sūrah An-Naḥl and it is: إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ (16:90 cited above) [Ibn Kathīr]

Then, there is the case of another Ṣaḥābi, Sayyidnā Aktham ibn al-Ṣaifi. He actually embraced Islam on the basis of this very verse. Imām Ibn Kathīr, quoting Ma'rifatuṣ-Ṣaḥābah, a book by Abū Ya'lā, who was known as a Ḥafiẓ of Ḥadīth (virtually a living data bank of Ḥadīth in contemporary terms), has reported with sound authority that Aktham ibn al-Saifi was the chief of his people. When he learnt about the Holy Prophet ﷺ, his claim to prophethood and his propagation of Islam, he decided to visit the Holy Prophet ﷺ personally. But, his people suggested

to him that he was their chief, the highest ranking person among them, therefore, his going there personally was not appropriate. Then, Aktham proposed the alternative that they should select two persons from the tribe who should go there, survey the situation and report back to him. These two people presented themselves before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and submitted that they had come from Aktham ibn al-Ṣaifi to find out two things. Aktham has two questions for you:

مَنْ اَنْتَ وَمَا اَنْتَ

'Who are you and what are you?'

He said: 'The answer to the first question is that I am Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah, and the answer to the second question is that I am a servant of Allah and His Rasūl (messenger)'. After that, he recited this verse of Sūrah An-Naḥl which begins with: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْاِحْسَانِ (90). The two emissaries requested him to recite those sentences to them once again. He kept reciting the verse before them until the verse was committed to their memory.

The emissaries returned to Aktham and reported that by asking the first question their intention was to find out his lineage. But, he did not give much attention to this. He simply considered it sufficient to give the name of his father. Yet, when they checked on his lineage with others, they found out that he was very high in lineage and nobility. Then, they told Aktham that the Holy Prophet ﷺ also recited some words before them which they would narrate to him.

When the emissaries recited the verse under reference to Aktham ibn al-Ṣaifi, he promptly said: 'This tells us that he bids morals which are high and forbids morals which are low. Let all of you embrace his religion as soon as possible so that you stay ahead of other people, and not lag behind as camp followers.' [Ibn Kathīr]

Similarly, Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ibn Maẓ'ūn رضي الله عنه says: 'At the initial stage, I had embraced Islam because people around said so. But, Islam had not taken roots in my heart. Then, there came a day when I was present in the blessed company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. All of a sudden, signs associated with the descent of revelation on him became apparent, and after some strange things had transpired, he said: "The emissary of

Allah Ta'ālā came to me and this verse was revealed upon me". Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ibn Maẓ'ūn ﷺ says that once he saw this event and heard this verse, his faith became all firm and fortified in his heart and the love for Rasūlullāh ﷺ came to be settled there for good'. [After reporting this event, Ibn Kathīr has said that it is supported by strong and authentic chain of transmitting authorities]

Likewise, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse before Walīd ibn Mughīrah, he went to report his impression before his people, the Quraish of Makkah, in the following words:

والله انّ له' لحلاوة وانّ عليه لطلاوة وانّ اصله لمُوْرق وأعلاة لمثمر وما هو بقول بشر

By God, in it, there is a special sweetness and, above it there is a unique hallow of light, and leaves are going to sprout out from its roots and fruits are going to show up on its branches - and this can never be the speech of any human being.

The Command To Do Three Things And Not To Do Three

Allah Ta'ālā bids three things in this verse. These are: (1) To do justice, (2) to be good, (3) to give relatives (their due). Then, He forbids three things. These are: (1) Shameful acts, (2) evil deeds, (3) transgression. The Islamic legal sense of these six words, and their limits, are being explained as follows:

Al-'Adl : العَدْل : The real and literal meaning of this word is to make equal. Pertinent to this, the equitable judgement of officials in the disputed cases of people is called Al-'Adl or justice. The statement: أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ (and that when you judge between people, judge with fairness - 4:58) in the Holy Qur'ān carries this very sense and, in view of this, the word Al-'Adl (justice) also refers to moderation (*al-i'tidāl*) between the two extremes of excess (*al-ifrāṭ*) and deficiency (*at-tafrīṭ*). Then, very much in congruity with this sense, some Tafsīr authorities have explained Al-'Adl at this place as the equality of the outward and the inward state of a person, that is, what one says or does through the obvious organs of his body should also be compatible with what he believes in and lives by. However, the truth of the matter is that the word Al-'Adl here has been used in its general sense which is inclusive of all these forms and shades reported from different Tafsīr authorities. There is no contradiction or di-

vergence in them.

And according to Ibn al-'Arabi, the instrinsic meaning of Al-'Adl is to make equal, then, different congruities go to make its sense different. For instance, one sense of Al-'Adl or justice is that man should do justice between his Nafs (self) and his Rabb (Lord-God). If so, it would mean that he should give preference to the right of Allah Ta'ālā over the pleasure of his self and make the seeking of His pleasure far more urgent and prior than the pursuit of his own desires and obey His commands and totally abstain from what He has forbidden.

Then, there is the second kind of justice which requires that one enter into a deal of justice with his own self, that is, protect his self from all such challenges which bring physical or spiritual destruction upon him, refuse to fulfill such desires of his self which are harmful for him in the end, be content and satisfied observing patience, and avoid putting unnecessary burden on his self without valid excuse.

The third kind of justice prevails between one's own self and the rest of Allah's creation. In this case, the essential sense is that one should deal with the whole creation in a cooperative spirit wishing well, doing good and having sympathy, never betray anyone with the slightest breach of trust in any transaction whether minor or major, demand from his self justice for everyone, and see to it that no human being is hurt by anything said or done by him whether apparent or concealed.

Similarly, there is the justice done when two parties bring one of their cases for adjudication before a person, then, it is the duty of that person that he must decide the case without any tilt towards anyone and in accordance with what is the truth. Then, it is also a form of justice when one leaves out the extreme options of excess and deficiency in all matters and takes to the path of moderation. This is the sense Abū 'Abdullāh al-Rāzī prefers when he says that the word Al-'Adl (justice) is inclusive of moderation in belief, moderation in deed, moderation in morals, everything. [Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ]

Finally, Imām Al-Qurṭubī who gives all these details to determine the sense of Al-'Adl also considers it good for the purpose. This also tells us that the one single word, Al-'Adl, in this verse encompasses in itself the adherence to all good morals and deeds and the avoidance of all bad

morals and deeds.

Al-Iḥsān : اَلْاِحْسَان : The real and literal meaning of Al-Iḥsān is to make something good. It has two kinds: (1) that one makes deeds or morals and habits become good and perfect in one's own person; (2) that one deals with the other person nicely, decently and favourably. To cover this second sense, Arabic usage takes: الى (*ilā*) as the preposition after it, as it appears in a verse of the Qur'ān: اَحْسِنْ كَمَآ اَحْسَنَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكَ (be good as Allah has been good to you - 28:77).

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has said that this word has been used in its general sense in the cited verse, therefore, it is inclusive of both kinds of Iḥsān. Then, the first kind of Iḥsān, that is, doing something well in its own right, is also general - for instance, to come out with acts of worship in their best possible form, to make efforts to improve upon personal deeds and morals and to seek betterment in dealings with others.

The meaning of Iḥsān given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself in the famous Ḥadīth of Jibra'īl relates to the quality of Iḥsān in acts of 'Ibādah or worship. The gist of his blessed statement is: Worship Allah as if you are seeing Allah. And if you cannot imagine Divine presence at this level, then, each person must have at least this much certitude that Allah Almighty is, after all, seeing what he or she is doing. The reason is that it is a cardinal part of Islamic faith that not the minutest molecule of this universe can remain outside the reach of the knowledge and perception of Allah Ta'ālā.

To sum up, it can be said that the second command given in this verse is that of Iḥsān. Included here is the Iḥsān of 'Ibadah (the betterment of acts of worship) as explained by the Ḥadīth. Also included here is the Iḥsān or betterment of all deeds, morals and habits, that is, seeing that they come out right, good and authentic in the form and spirit desired. And also included here is to be good to the whole creation of Allah, whether believer or infidel, human or animal.

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has said: The person in whose house his cat is not fed and taken care of and the birds in whose cage are not attended to as due, then, no matter how devoted to acts of worship he may be, he would still not be counted among the Muḥsinīn, those who are good to others.

In conclusion, the first command given in this verse is that of Al-'Adl or justice, then, that of Al-Iḥsān or being good. Some Tafsīr authorities have said that justice means that one should give the right of the other person in full and take what comes to him, neither less nor more; then, should someone hurt you, you hurt him only as much as he did, no more. And Iḥsān or being good means that you give the other person more than his real due and, as for your own right, ignore it to the limit that you willingly accept even if it turns out to be less than due. Similarly, when someone hurts you physically or verbally, then, rather than inflict an equal retaliation against that person, you better forgive him, in fact, return the evil done by him with what is good for him. Thus, the command to do justice comes in the form of what is Farḍ and Wājib (obligatory and necessary as duty) while the command to be good appears in the status of an act which is voluntary (Nafl) and is motivated by a well-meaning desire to contribute more in the way of what is good.

Give relatives (their due) : إِيْتَآءِ ذِى الْقُرْبٰى : The third command given in this verse is to give relatives (their due). The word: إِيْتَآء (*'ītā'*) used in the text means to give something - with the added sense of giving as gift or presentation in good grace. The word: اَلْقُرْبٰى (*al-qurbā*) means relationship or kinship; and: ذِى اَلْقُرْبٰى (*dhil-qurbā*) means relatives or kin. Thus, the command: إِيْتَآءِ ذِى الْقُرْبٰى (*'ītā' dhil-qurbā*) comes to mean to give something to relatives. That which has to be given has not been spelled out here. But, there is another verse in the Qur'ān where the object does find mention: 'فَاٰتِ ذَا الْقُرْبٰى حَقَّهٗ' (give the relative his due - 17:26). As obvious, the same object applies here too, that is, relatives be given their due. Included under this 'due' is serving them financially, as well as serving them physically, and visiting them when sick, and taking care of them when in need, and the giving of verbal comfort and the expression of concern and sympathy too. Though, giving relatives their due was included under the spectrum of the word: Al-Iḥsān, yet it has been mentioned separately in order to place stress on its added importance.

Given upto this point were three commands asserted positively. The other three asserted negatively, denoting prohibition and unlawfulness, are as follows:

"And forbids from shameless acts, evil deeds and transgression": وَيَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِوَالْبَغْيِ : The first word: اَلْفَحْشَآء (*al-fahsha'*) translated as

'shameful acts', refers to such evil word or deed the evil of which is all too open and clear and which everyone considers bad. Then, اَلْمُنْكَر (*al-munkar*) translated as 'evil deeds', denotes the word or deed the unlawfulness or impermissibility of which is agreed upon by the well-recognized authentic exponents of the Sharī'ah of Islam. Therefore, no side can be regarded as *'munkar'* in their Ijtihād-based differences and, as for the word: '*Al-Munkar*', it includes all sins whether outward or inward, done practically or committed morally. The real meaning of the third word: اَلْبَغْی (*al-baghy*) translated as 'transgression' is to cross the limit. The sense is that of injustice and excess. At this place, though the sense of the word: *Al-Munkar* (evil deeds) is inclusive of both *Al-Faḥshā'* (shameful acts) and *Al-Baghy* (transgression), but *Al-Faḥshā'* has been picked out as a separate entry, and made to appear first as well, because of its extreme evil and abomination. And the word: *Al-Baghy* has been taken up separately because its fallout is contagious. It affects others. Sometimes this transgression reaches the outer limits of mutual hostility, even armed confrontation, or it could go still further and cause international disorder.

According to a saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, there is no sin, except injustice, the retaliation against which and the punishment for which comes so quickly. From this we learn that the ultimate severe punishment for injustice due in the Hereafter has to come anyway, however, much before that happens, Allah Ta'ālā punishes the perepetrator of injustice in this mortal world as well - even though, he may fail to realize that the punishment he received was for a particular injustice committed by him and that Allah Ta'ālā has promised to help the victim of injustice.

The six commands, imperative and prohibitive, given in this verse are - if pondered upon - an elixir for the perfect prosperity of man's individual and collective life. May Allah bless us all with the ability of following them.

Verses 91 - 96

وَاَوْفُوْا بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ اِذَا عٰهَدْتُّمْ وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا الْاَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيْدِهَا وَقَدْ
جَعَلْتُمُ اللّٰهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيْلًا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا

كَالَّتِي نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ أَنْكَاثًا ۖ تَتَّخِذُونَ أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا

بَيْنَكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ أُمَّةٌ هِيَ أَرْبَىٰ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ ۚ إِنَّمَا يَبْلُوكُمُ اللَّهُ بِهِ ۚ وَلَيُبَيِّنَنَّ

لَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ

أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَٰكِنْ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَلَتُسْأَلُنَّ عَمَّا

كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ فَتَزِلَّ قَدَمٌ

بَعْدَ ثُبُوتِهَا وَتَذُوقُوا السُّوءَ بِمَا صَدَدْتُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَلَكُمْ

عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۚ إِنَّمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ

هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ ۖ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ

بَاقٍ ۗ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

And fulfill the Covenant of Allah when you pledge, and do not break oaths after you swear them solemnly, while you have made Allah a witness over you. Surely, Allah knows all that you do. [91]

And do not be like the woman, who has broken her yarn into pieces after spinning it firmly, by taking your oaths as means of mischief between yourselves, merely because a group is higher (in number and wealth) than the other. In fact, Allah puts you to a test thereby and, of course, He will make clear to you on the Day of Resurrection all that you disputed about. [92]

And if Allah so willed, He would have made you all a single community, but He lets whom He wills go astray and takes whom He wills to the right path. And you will be questioned about what you used to do. [93]

And do not make your oaths a means of mischief among yourselves, lest a foot should slip after it is firmly placed, and you taste evil for your having prevented (others) from the path of Allah, and for you there be a great punishment. [94]

And do not take a paltry price against the pledge of Allah. Indeed, what is with Allah is much better for you, if but you knew. [95] **What is with you shall end and what is with Allah shall last. And certainly, We shall give**

those who observed patience their reward for the good they used to do. [96]

Commentary

Breaking Pledges is Forbidden

The word: عَهْد (*'ahd*) is inclusive of all transactions, pacts and pledges the responsibility of which has been assumed verbally, whether one does or does not swear by it, and whether it relates to doing something or not doing it.

In fact, these verses are the explanation and conclusion of previous verses. The previous verses carried the command to do justice and to be good. The sense of justice there includes the fulfillment of pledges as well. [Qurṭubī]

After having given a pledge or made a contract with someone, breaking it is a major sin. But, in the event it is broken, there is no Kaffārah (expiation) fixed for this purpose. Instead, it brings the punishment of the Hereafter on the offender. According to Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that a flag shall be planted on the back of the pledge-breaker on the Day of Resurrection which will become the cause of his or her disgrace there.

Similarly, acting contrary to what one has sworn by is also a major sin. In the Hereafter, it is full of unimagineably evil consequences while in the present world too there are its particular situations in which Kaffārah (expiation) becomes necessary. [Qurṭubī]

In verse 92: اَنْ تَكُوْنَ اُمَّةٌ هِيَ اَرْبٰى مِنْ اُمَّةٍ (merely because a group is higher [in number and wealth] than the other), Muslims have been ordered that they should not break the pact they enter into with a group simply for the sake of worldly interests and gains. For example, they may come to think that the group or party with which they have entered into a pact is weak and few in numbers, or lacks financial backing, while the other group or party abounds in numbers and strength, or is wealthy. Now, if they are tempted to join the party having power and wealth in the hope of better gains from them, this breaking of the pledge given to the first party is not permissible. Rather than do something like that, one should stay by the pledge given and let all gains and losses rest with Allah Ta'ālā. However, if the group or party with which one has entered into a

pact commits or commissions acts contrary to the dictates of Islamic religious law, then, it is necessary to break that pledge - subject to the condition that they be clearly forewarned that Muslims will not be bound by that pact anymore - as stated in the verse: فَانْبِذْ اِلَيْهِمْ عَلٰى سَوَآءٍ (then, throw [the treaty] towards them being right forward - 8:58).

At the conclusion of the verse, the given situation has been identified as a device to test Muslims whereby Allah Ta'ālā tries them to determine if they would obey the desires of their self and break the solemn pledge, or go on to sacrifice their selfish motives in obedience to the command of Allah Ta'ālā.

An oath sworn to deceive someone may cause forfeiture of Faith ('Īmān)

Verse 94 which begins with the words: وَلَاتَتَّخِذُوْٓا اَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا (do not take your oaths as a means of mischief) gives yet another instruction to stay away from getting involved in what is a great sin laden with evil consequences. It means that anyone who at the very time of taking an oath harbours other ideas and intentions, is all set to act counter to the oath taken while going through the exercise of oath-taking merely to deceive the other party, then, this would be an act far more dangerous than that of breaking a common oath. As a result, the danger is that this person may end up being all deprived of the very asset of 'Īmān (faith). The sentence which follows immediately, that is: فَتَزِلَّ قَدَمٌ بَعْدَ ثُبُوْتِهَا (lest a foot should slip after it is firmly placed - 94), means exactly this. [Qurṭubī]

Accepting Bribe is Sternly Forbidden as It Breaks the Covenant of Allah

Verse 95 which begins with the words: وَلَاتَشْتَرُوْا بِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا (And do not take a paltry price against the pledge of Allah) that is, 'do not break the Covenant of Allah for a paltry price.' Here, 'a paltry price' refers to worldly life and its gains. No matter how major they may be yet, as compared with the gains of the Hereafter, even the entire world and its entire wealth is nothing but paltry. Whoever opts for the gains of the mortal world at the cost of the far superior returns in the Hereafter has struck a deal which will bring nothing but utter loss - because, selling off a blessing which is supreme and a wealth which is everlasting in ex-

change for something fast perishing and instrinsically low is what no sensible person would ever elect to do.

Ibn 'Aṭiyyāh said: If doing something is obligatory on a person, then, it is a Covenant of Allah due against him. He is responsible for it. And in the process of fulfilling this duty, the act of charging wages or something in return, and not doing what duty calls for without being first paid off in cash or kind, is what amounts to breaking the Covenant of Allah. Similarly, if not doing something is obligatory on a person, then, should that person do it against returns received from someone, that too will constitute the breaking of the Covenant of Allah.

This tells us that all prevailing kinds of bribery are unlawful. For example, a government servant who receives a salary for what he does has virtually given a pledge to Allah that he would perform the job assigned to him against the salary he receives. Now, if he goes about asking for some sort of return from someone in order to do that job, and keeps hedging and postponing the required action until he has that return, then, this official is breaking the Covenant of Allah. Similarly, doing something for which the department has not empowered him, even doing it by accepting bribe, is also a breach of pledge. [Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ]

A Comprehensive Definition of Bribe

The statement of Ibn 'Aṭiyyāh quoted above also accomodates a fairly inclusive definition of bribe (Rishwat) which, in the words of Tafsīr Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, is as follows:

اخذ الاموال علی فعل مَا یجب علی الأخذ فعله اوفعل مَا یجب علیه ترکه

> Taking a return for not doing a job the doing of which is obligatory on a person, or taking a return for doing a job not doing which is obligatory on a person, is what bribe is. [Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 533, v. 5]

That the combined blessings of the whole world are paltry has been stated in the next verse (96) through the words: مَا عِندَكُمْ يَنفَدُ وَمَا عِندَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ that is, 'what is with you (meaning worldly gains) is to end; and what is with Allah Ta'ālā (meaning the reward and punishment of the Hereafter) is to last for ever'.

All Wordly Gains and States will Perish - Only their Outcome with Allah shall Remain

A casual look at the expression: مَا عِندَكُمْ (*mā 'indakum*: 'what is with you' meaning world gains) leads one to think of wealth and possessions only. My revered teacher, Maulānā Sayyid Aṣghar Ḥusain of Deoband, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, said that the word: مَا : *mā* (what) is general lexically and there is nothing prohibiting us from taking it in a general sense, therefore, included under it are wealth and possessions of the present world as well as all states and matters that one experiences therein. These could be happiness and sorrow, pain and comfort, sickness and health, gain and loss or someone's friendship or enmity. These form part of it for all these are transitory and must perish. However, the after-effects of all these states and matters which are to bring reward or punishment on the Day of Judgement are destined to remain. So, any reckless pursuit of states and matters that must perish and to stake one's life and its energies on this altar by becoming negligent of the eternal reward and punishment is something no sane person should elect to do.

Verse 97

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً ۚ
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ اَجْرَهُمْ بِاَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٧﴾

Whoever, male or female, has done righteous deed, while a believer, We shall certainly make him live a good life and shall give such people their reward for the good they used to do. [97]

Commentary

What is 'good life'?

According to the majority of commentators, the expression 'good life' used here means a pure and pleasing life in the present world while some Tafsīr authorities have taken it to mean life in the Hereafter. And a closer look at the explanation given by the majority would also show that it does not mean that such a person will never encounter poverty or sickness. Instead, it means that a believer - even if he ever faces poverty or pain - has two things with him which shield him from becoming dis-

turbed. First comes his habit of remaining content with the available (*qanā'ah*), the hallmark of a simple life. This thing works in straitened circumstances as well. Secondly, there is this belief of his, the belief that he is going to receive the great and eternal blessings of the Hereafter in return for whatever poverty or pain he has suffered from. Poised counter to this is the condition of a disbeliever and sinner. If such a person faces poverty and pain, he has nothing to hold him together and give him solace and comfort. In this state, he is likely to lose his sanity, even think of committing suicide. And in case he was affluent, his greed would not let him sit peacefully. When the drive for more wealth makes him a millionaire, the dreams of becoming a billionaire would keep spoiling his peace.

As for righteous believers, says Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, Allah Ta'ālā blesses them with a life full of pleasure, contentment and gracefulness right here in this world as well, something that never changes whatever the condition. That their life will be graceful while they enjoy health and extended means is all too obvious, particularly so on the ground that they just do not have the greed to keep their wealth increasing unnecessarily, an urge that keeps harassing one under all circumstances. And even if they have to face lean days or sickness of some sort, they always have a strong support to fall back on. They are perfect believers in the promises made by Allah. They have strong hopes of seeing ease after hardship and comfort after pain. These strengths never let their life become graceless. It is like the work of a farmer who has made his farm ready for crops. No matter how much pain he takes in working to see his crops grow, yet he welcomes all that for the sake of the comfort he is going to have. In a short time, he is certain, he is going to have the best of return for what he has done. A businessman or a wage earner would do the same. They would face all sorts of hardship in their job, even a little disgrace once in a while. But, they brave through everything and remain happy and hopeful. They believe that their business will bring profit and their job, a salary. The believer too believes that he is getting a return for every hardship and when comes the life of the Hereafter, his return for every hardship will come to him in the form of blessings that are great and everlasting. As for the life of the present world, it is not such a big deal as compared to that of the Hereafter. Therefore, a believer finds it easy to remain patient against worldly variations in living conditions.

Thus, these conditions never make a believer suffer from anxiety, apprehension and boredom. This is the 'good life' a believer is blessed with in cash, on the spot, right here in this world.

Verses 98 - 100

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْاٰنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ ﴿٩٨﴾ إِنَّهٗ لَيْسَ
لَهٗ سُلْطٰنٌ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ إِنَّمَا سُلْطٰنُهٗ
عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهٗ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِهٖ مُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

So, when you recite the Qur'ān, seek the protection of Allah against Satan, the accursed. [98] **He is such that he has no power over those who believe and place trust in their Lord.** [99] **His power is only over those who befriend him and those who associate partners with Him.** [100]

Sequence of Verses

Emphasis was laid in previous verses over the fulfillment of the covenant with Allah following which stated there was the importance and desirability of acting righteously in one's life. That one neglects to follow these commandments happens because of Satanic instigations. Therefore, this verse teaches us to seek protection against Satan, the accursed - something needed in every good deed. But, it will be noticed that it has been mentioned particularly with the recitation of the Qur'ān. One reason for this particularization could also be that the recitation of the Qur'ān is an act so unique that the Satan himself runs away from it. As said poetically:

دیو بگریزد ازاں قوم کہ قرآں خوانند

Satan bolts from people who recite the Qur'ān!

Then, there are specified Verses and Chapters which have been-tested and they produce the desired result in removing the traces of Satanic inputs particularly. That they are effective and beneficial stands proved from definite textual authorities (*nuṣuṣ*) - Bayān al-Qur'ān. Despite this factor, when came the command to seek protection from the Satan in conjunction with the recitation of the Qur'ān, it becomes all the more necessary with other deeds.

In addition to that, there is always the danger of Satanic instigations intruding into the recitation of the Qur'ān itself. For instance, one may fall short in observing the etiquette due during the recitation or that it remains devoid of the essential spirit of deliberation, thinking, submission and humbleness. So, for this too, it was deemed necessary that protection from Satanic instigations should be sought (Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī and others).

Commentary

In the preface of his Tafsīr, Ibn Kathīr has said: Human beings have two kinds of enemies. The first ones come from their own kind, like the general run of disbelievers. The other kind is that of the Jinn who are diabolic and disobedient. Islam commands defence against the first kind of enemy through Jihād involving fighting and killing. But, for the other kind, the command is limited to the seeking of protection from Allah only. The reason is that the first kind of enemy happens to be homogenous. Its attack comes openly, visibly. Therefore, fighting and killing in Jihād against such an enemy was made obligatory. As for the enemy of the Satanic kind, it is not visible. Its attack on humankind does not take place frontally. Therefore, as a measure of defence against such an enemy, the seeking of the protection of such a Being has been made obligatory that no one is able to see, neither the humankind, nor the Satan. Then, there is that subtle expediency in entrusting the defence against Satan with Allah. Is it not that one who stands subdued by the Satan is actually rejected and deserving of punishment in the sight of Allah? Quite contrary to this is the case of the humanoid enemy of human beings, that is, the disbelievers. If someone is subdued or killed while confronting them, he becomes a martyr (*shahīd*), and deserving of reward from Allah (*thawāb*)! Therefore, when one confronts an enemy of human beings with all his strength, it turns out to be nothing but beneficial, no matter what the circumstances - either he would prevail over the enemy and put an end to his power, or would himself embrace *shahādah* (martyrdom in the way of Allah) and deserve the best of returns with Him.

Related Rulings (*masā'il*)

1. The reciting of: أَعُوذُ بِاللهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيمِ (*a'ūdhu bil-lāhi minash-shaiṭānir-rajīm*: I seek protection with Allah from Shaiṭān, the accursed) before initiating the recitation of the Qur'ān stands proved from the Holy Prophet ﷺ in order that the command given in this verse is carried out.

But, not doing it occasionally also stands proved from authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*) *aḥādīth*. Therefore, the majority of Muslim scholars have not classed this injunction as obligatory (*wājib*). Instead, they have declared it to be Sunnah, a position on which Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has reported a consensus (*ijmā'*) of the scholars of the Muslim community. As for Ḥadīth narratives carrying the word and deed of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, whether those of reciting: أَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰه (*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*) under most conditions or those of not reciting under some, all these have been mentioned exhaustively by Ibn Kathīr at the beginning of his Tafsīr.

2. Should *ta'awwudh* (تَعَوُّذ) that is, '*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*', be recited only at the beginning of the first *raka'ah* while in Ṣalāh, or should it be done at the beginning of every *raka'ah*? Views of leading Muslim jurists differ in this matter. According to the great Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى, it should be recited only in the first *raka'ah* while Imām Shāfi'ī رحمه الله تعالى declares its recitation at the beginning of every *raka'ah* as commendable (*mustaḥabb*). Arguments given by both have been presented in Tafsīr Maẓharī with full elaboration. (p. 49, v. 5)

3. While reciting the Qur'ān - whether in Ṣalāh or out of it - the saying of '*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*' is a Sunnah. The rule applies to both situations equally. But, after it has been said once, one may go on reciting as much as one wishes to, for the same single *ta'awwudh* (said at the beginning) is sufficient. Yes, if one abandons the recitation in the middle, gets busy with some mundane chore and then resumes it all over again, one should re-initiate the recitation by saying '*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*' and '*bismillah*' once again at that time.

4. Saying '*a'ūdhu bil-lāh*' before reading any word or book other than the Qur'ān is not a Sunnah. There, one should recite only *bismillāh*. (Al-Durr al-Mukhtār, Shāmī)

However, the Ḥadīth teaches the saying of *ta'awwudh* during other things done and situations faced. For example, when someone gets very angry - so says the Ḥadīth - the heat of the anger goes away by saying: أَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ (*a'ūdhu bil-lāhi minash-shaiṭānir rajīm*: I seek protection with Allah from Shaiṭān, the accursed). (Ibn Kathīr)

It also appears in Ḥadīth that, before going to the toilet, saying:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّیْ اَعُوْذُبِكَ مِنَ الْخُبُثِ وَالْخَبَآئِثِ

(*Allāhumma innī a'ūdhu bika minal-khubuthi wal-khabā'ith*)
O Allah, I seek protection with you from the foul and the impure

is commendable (*mustaḥabb*). (Shāmī)

The way of Faith and Trust in Allah is the way of freedom from the power and control of the Shaiṭān

Verses 99 and 100 make it clear that Allah Ta'ālā has not given the Shaiṭān the kind of power which would disarm any human being and compel him to become helpless and take to evil. So, should one opt for not using his capability of choice and control because of sheer carelessness or some selfish motive, then, this would be his own fault. Therefore, it was said that people who have faith in Allah and who, rather than trust their will power in their states and actions, place their ultimate trust in Allah Ta'ālā for He is the One who gives us the ability to do everything good and also the One who shields us from everything evil. The Shaiṭān cannot possess and dictate such people. Of course, those who elect to befriend none but the Shaitān because of their selfish motives, particularly like things about him and go about associating others in the pristine divinity of Allah Ta'ālā, then, the Shaiṭān is all over them, in possession, in control, and would not let them go towards anything good while, in every evil, they are right in front.

The same subject has been taken up in verse 42 of Sūrah al-Hijr where Allah Ta'ālā has Himself refuted the claim of the Shaiṭān by saying: اِنَّ عِبَادِیْ لَیْسَ لَكَ عَلَیْهِمْ سُلْطٰنٌ اِلاَّ مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغٰوِیْنَ (Surely, My servants [are such that] you have no power over them - except [over] the one who follows you from among the astray - 15:42).

Verses 101- 105

وَاِذَا بَدَّلْنَآ اٰیَةً مَّكَانَ اٰیَةٍ ۙ وَّاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا یُنَزِّلُ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مُفْتَرٍ ؕ
بَلْ اَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا یَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۱۰۱﴾ قُلْ نَزَّلَهٗ رُوْحُ الْقُدُسِ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ
لِیُثَبِّتَ الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَهُدًی وَّ بُشْرٰی لِلْمُسْلِمِیْنَ ﴿۱۰۲﴾ وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ
اَنَّهُمْ یَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّمَا یُعَلِّمُهٗ بَشَرٌ ؕ لِسَانُ الَّذِیْ یُلْحِدُوْنَ اِلَیْهِ اَعْجَمِیٌّ

وَّهٰذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِىٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ لَايُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ لا
لَايَهْدِيْهِمُ اللّٰهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٤﴾ اِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِى الْكَذِبَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا
يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ج وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

And when We replace a verse with another verse - and Allah knows best what He reveals - they say, "You are but a forger." Instead, most of them do not know. [101]

Say, "This has been brought down by Rūḥ al-Qudus (the Holy Spirit - Jibrā'īl) from your Lord rightly (as due), so that it makes the believers firm and becomes guidance and good news for the Muslims. [102]

And We know well that they say, "It is a man who teaches him." The language of the one they refer to is non-Arabic while this is clear Arabic language. [103]

Surely, those who do not believe in Allah's verses, Allah does not lead them to the right path and for them there is a painful punishment. [104]

Those who forge lies are but the ones who do not believe in Allah's verses, and it is they who are the liars. [105]

Sequence of Verses

In the previous verse (98), there was an instruction to say *'a'ūdhu bil-lāh'* (I seek protection with Allah) while reciting the Qur'ān which indicates that the Shaiṭān puts scruples in the heart when one recites the Qur'an. In the verses cited above, there is a refutation of such Satanic instigations.

Verses 106 - 109

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اِيْمَانِهٖٓ اِلَّا مَنْ اُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهٗ مُطْمَئِنٌّۢ بِالْاِيْمَانِ
وَلٰكِنْ مَّنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ج وَلَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمُ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى
الْاٰخِرَةِ لا وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَايَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ طَبَعَ
اللّٰهُ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ وَسَمْعِهِمْ وَاَبْصَارِهِمْ ج وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْغٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

لَاجَرَمَ اَنَّهُمْ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

Whoever rejects his faith in Allah after having believed in Him - not the one who is put to duress while his heart is at peace with Faith, but the one who has opened the bosom for disbelief - the wrath of Allah is upon such people and for them there is a heavy punishment. [106]

That is because they have preferred the worldly life over the Hereafter, and that Allah does not lead the disbelieving people to the right path. [107]

Those are the ones Allah has put a seal on their hearts, their ears and their eyes; and they are the neglectful. [108] **Invariably, they are the losers in the Hereafter.** [109]

Commentary

From the first verse (106) comes the religious ruling about a person who has been compelled to utter a word of infidelity (*kufr*) under the threat that he would be killed if he did not do that. If he feels that, in all likelihood, the people threatening him have full capability of doing just that, then, this is a state of duress. If he were to utter some word of disbelief verbally - but, with a heart firm on Faith, a heart that shuns saying what is false and evil - then, there is no sin on him, nor will his wife become unlawful for him. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī).

This verse was revealed about the noble Ṣaḥābah who were arrested by the Mushriks. Their disbelieving captors had told them that they must return to infidelity failing which they would be killed.

Those so arrested were Sayyidnā 'Ammār ﷺ and his parents, Sayyidnā Yāsir and Sayyidah Sumayyah ﷺ, and Sayyidnā Ṣuhaib, Bilāl and Khabbāb ﷺ. Out of these, Sayyidnā Yāsir ﷺ and his wife, Sayyidah Sumayyah رضی اللہ عنہا totally refused to utter any word of disbelief. Sayyidnā Yāsir ﷺ was killed while Sayyidah Sumayyah رضی اللہ عنہا was tied in between two camels who were made to run which tore her apart in two separate body parts. This was how she met her *shahādah* (martyrdom in the way of Allah). And these are the same two blessed souls who were the first to meet their *shahādah* for the sake of Islām. Similarly, Sayyidnā Khabbāb ﷺ totally refused to utter any word of disbelief and it was in perfect peace that he accepted the fate of being killed by the dis-

believers. Out of the remaining, Sayyidnā 'Ammār ﷺ went by making a mere verbal declaration of his disbelief in the face of such a danger to his life, but his heart was perfectly satisfied and firmly set upon his Faith. Once he was released by the enemy, he presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and narrated this event with great pain. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him, "when you were making this statement, what was going on in your heart?" He submitted, "As for my heart, it was at peace and firmly set on my Faith." The Holy Prophet ﷺ put him at rest by telling him that he was not to face any punishment for that. It was in confirmation of this verdict by him that the present verse was revealed. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

The Definition of *ikrāh* or Compulsion

Literally, *Ikrāh* means using threat or violence to force a person to act against his or her will. Then, it has two degrees. In the first degree of Ikrāh, one is not willing by heart to do something, but is also not that denuded of choice and volition to say no. In the terminology of Muslim jurists, this is known as اکراہ غیر ملجیٔ (*ikrāh ghayr mulji'*: state of compulsion not forced actually). Under such duress, saying any word of disbelief (*kufr*) or doing something unlawful (*ḥarām*) does not become permissible. However, there are some supplementary injunctions which do release some adverse effects even against this situation. Relevant details appear in Books of Fiqh. In the second degree of Ikrāh, one is just sucked out of all choice so much so that should he fail to carry out the order of the perpiterators of this coercion (Ikrāh), he would be killed or some of his organ is amputated. This, in the terminology of Muslim jurists, is called Ikrāh Mulji' which means a compulsion which makes one totally choiceless and helpless. When under the state of such duress, the mere verbalization of the word of disbelief - subject to the condition that one's heart is firm and at peace with Faith - is permissible. Similarly, short of killing another human being, should one be coerced to do some other unlawful deed, it will bring no sin to commit that unlawful act.

But, the concessions given in both kinds of Ikrāh are subject to a condition that the coercer threatening to do what he says he will do should actually be capable of doing just that, and the coerced should have the overwhelming likelihood that should he fail to oblige him, he would go ahead and definitely do what he is threatening to do.

Related Ruling

There are two kinds of transactions. (1) Those in which the transaction can be effected only by mutual consent and heart felt willingness of the parties, like sale, gift, etc. There is the definitive authority of the Holy Qur'ān to this effect. The Holy Qur'ān says, لَا تَأْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَكُوْنَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ: "Do not eat up the wealth of others, unless there is a trade with mutual consent" (4:29) And then it appears in Ḥadīth:

لَايَحِلُّ مَالُ امْرِءٍ مُّسْلِمٍ اِلَّا بِطِيْبِ نَفْسٍ مِّنْهُ

The wealth and property of a Muslim does not become lawful unless it be with a whole-hearted pleasure from the person.

If such transactions were to be arranged and executed under duress (with Ikrāh), they have no validity in the sight of the Sharī'ah of Islam. In normal practice, once the person concerned comes out of the state of Ikrāh (compulsion, duress), he will have the option to reassess the sale or gift done under duress and exercise his free will to retain or cancel it.

Then there are some transactions which depend on verbal committment only. Here, the intention and the volition in the heart or pleasure and will are not the binding conditions of the transaction - such as, marriage, divorce, revocation of divorce, freedom of a slave etc. For such matters, it is said in Ḥadīth:

ثلث جدّهنّ جدٌّ وهزلهنّ جدّ النكاح والطلاق والرّجعة (رواه ابوداؤد والترمذی وحسنه)

"There are three things in which not only the serious words, but also the nonserious words are counted as serious".

It means if two individuals go through the process of Offer and Acceptance in Marriage in accordance with attending conditions, or some husband divorces his wife by pronouncing it verbally, or verbally revokes the divorce given by him earlier - whether that be in jest with no intention in the heart for marriage or divorce or revocation - still, by a mere saying of the respective words, the marriage will stand solemnized, the divorce will become effective, and the revocation will turn out right. (Maẓharī)

According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Sha'bī, Zuhrī, Nakha'ī and Qatādah, may the mercy of Allah be upon them, this very injunction applies to 'divorce under duress' (طلاق مکره : *Talāq Mukrah*). It means that such a person being under duress was though not ready to divorce will-

ingly and by heart yet, rendered helpless, he uttered the words of divorce. Now, the actualization of divorce is connected with nothing but the pronouncing of the words of divorce. The intention and will of the heart is not a condition here - as proved from the Ḥadīth cited above. Therefore, this divorce will become effective.

But, according to Imām Shāfi'ī, and Sayyidnā 'Alī and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, the 'divorce under duress' (under the state of Ikrāh) will not take effect because it appears in Ḥadīth:

رُفِعَ عَنْ أُمَّتِي الْخَطَاءُ وَالنِّسْيَانُ وَ مَا اسْتُكْرِهُوا عَلَيْهِ (رواه الطبرانی عن ثوبان رض)

> Removed away from my Ummah are mistake, forgeting and what they are compelled to under coercion. (Reported by al-Ṭabarānī from Sayyidnā Thawbān ﷺ)

According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, this Ḥadīth is related to injunctions of the 'Ākhirah (Hereafter), that is, something said or done contrary to the Sharī'ah by mistake and forgetfulness or under duress will bring no sin. As for the rest of the injunctions pertaining to the mortal world as well as the incidences of doing things like that therein are to occur as felt and sensed. It goes without saying that the vestiges and rulings generated by this occurance shall continue to bring their relevant effects. For example, someone killed someone else by mistake, then, there is no doubt that he will neither incur the sin of killing him nor face the punishment of the Hereafter, but the way the tangible effect of killing has occured in the form of the victim's loss of life, very similarly, its subsequent Islamic legal effect will also follow: his wife will, after the period of Iddah, be able to enter a second marriage contract and the wealth and property left by him will be distributed in the form of inheritance to his legal heirs. Similary, when words to the effect of divorce, marriage or revocation were said verbally, then, their consequential Islamic legal effect will also follow. (Maẓharī, Qurṭubī) والله سبحانه اعلم.

Verses 110 - 113

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا فُتِنُوا ثُمَّ جٰهَدُوا وَصَبَرُوٓا ۙ إِنَّ
رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١٠﴾ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي كُلُّ نَفْسٍ تُجَادِلُ عَنْ

نَفْسِهَا وَتُوَفّٰى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۱﴾ وَضَرَبَ
اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ اٰمِنَةً مُّطْمَئِنَّةً يَّاْتِيْهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِّنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ
فَكَفَرَتْ بِاَنْعُمِ اللّٰهِ فَاَذَاقَهَا اللّٰهُ لِبَاسَ الْجُوْعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۲﴾ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَخَذَهُمُ
الْعَذَابُ وَهُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۳﴾

Then, your Lord - for those who left their homes after being persecuted, then fought in the way of Allah and stood patient - surely your Lord is, after all that, Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [110]

The day everyone will come defending himself, and everyone will be given in full what he did. And they will not be wronged. [111]

And Allah has given an example that there was a town, secure and satisfied, with its sustenance coming in plenty from every place. Then, it turned ungrateful to the bounties of Allah; so, Allah made it taste hunger and terror (cast over it) like a garment in return of what its people used to do. [112] **And surely there came to them a messenger from among themselves, but they belied him, so the punishment seized them, while they were transgressing.** [113]

Sequence of Verses

Warnings of punishment against disbelief (*kufr*) - whether original or apostacy (*irtidād*) - appeared in previous verses. After that, in the first (106) of the initial three verses cited above, it has been pointed clearly that 'Īmān or the declaration of faith is a wealth that could work wonders for a *kāfir* (disbeliever) or *murtadd* (apostate) who - if he were to come up with an honest and true 'Īmān - all his past sins would stand forgiven.

In the second verse (107), the last day of Qiyāmah was mentioned for the reason that all this phenomena of reward and punishment has to occur after that. In the third verse (108), it was said that the real punishment of disbelief and sin will, though come after the Qiyāmah, yet there are some sins the punishment of which is faced in a certain degree with-

in the present world.

Commentary

According to leading Tafsīr authorities, the similitude mentioned in verse 112 is general and universal. It does not relate to a particular habitation. However, there are others who connect it to what had happened in Makkah al-Mukarramah where people suffered from an acute famine for seven years so much so that they were compelled to eat animal carcass, dead dogs and filth. They were virtually gripped with the awe of Muslims. Then, the chiefs of Makkah came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ with the plea that those who had committed disbelief and disobedience against his call were all grown-up men. Women and children were innocent. Thereupon, the Holy Prophet ﷺ arranged to have food supplies for them sent from Madīnah al-Ṭaiyyibah. (Maẓharī)

And Abū Sufyān, while still in his state of *kufr*, requested the Holy Prophet ﷺ: You teach kindness to relatives and mercy and forgiveness. Here are your people standing on the brink of destruction. Please pray to Allah for the removal of this famine from us. Thereupon, the Holy Prophet ﷺ prayed for them and the famine was gone. (Qurṭubī)

As for the use of the word: لباس (*libās*: garment) to carry the sense of giving a taste of hunger and fear towards the later part of verse 112, it will be noted that a garment is not a thing to be tasted. But, the word 'garment' standing for '*libās*' has been used here with the force of a simile denoting something being wide-spread and all-enveloping. The suggestion being conveyed here is that fear and hunger were cast over them in a manner of a garment or dress which becomes an integral part of the body. This was how hunger and fear were released and set all over them. (Maẓharī)

Verses 114 - 119

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا ۠ وَّاشْكُرُوْا نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ
اِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ اِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَ الدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيْرِ
وَمَآ اُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ ۚ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَّلَا عَادٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ
رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَا تَصِفُ اَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ هٰذَا حَلٰلٌ

وَّهٰذَا حَرَامٌ لِّتَفْتَرُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ ط اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ
الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١١٦﴾ مَتَاعٌ قَلِيْلٌ ص وَّلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١٧﴾
وَعَلَى الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا مَا قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ج وَمَا ظَلَمْنٰهُمْ
وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِيْنَ عَمِلُوا
السُّوْٓءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابُوْا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ وَاَصْلَحُوْٓا لا اِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ
بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١١٩﴾ ع

So, eat the permissible and pure from what Allah has provided you with, and be grateful for the bounty of Allah, if you worship Him alone. [114]

He has but proibited for you the carrion, the blood, the flesh of swine and what has been invoked upon with a name other than that of Allah. However, if anyone is compelled by necessity - neither desiring, nor crossing the limit (of necessity) - then, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [115]

And do not say about what your tongues describe falsely, "This is lawful and that is unlawful" so that you may forge the lie upon Allah. Surely, those who forge a lie upon Allah do not prosper. [116] **(Let there be) a little enjoyment, and (then) for them there is a painful punishment.** [117]

And for those who are Jews, We had prohibited that which We have already told you. And We did not wrong them but they used to wrong themselves. [118]

Then your Lord - for those who did evil through ignorance, then repented after that and corrected themselves - surely your Lord is, after all that, Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [119]

Sequence and Explanation in Gist

Mentioned in the previous verses was that disbelievers will be punished for their ungratefulness to Allah whose blessings they had been enjoying. In the cited verses, Muslims have been instructed to stay away from ungratefulness, rather be grateful for Ḥalāl things Allah has given to them. After that, they were told how the disbelievers and polytheists

had become ungrateful by declaring what Allah had made Ḥalāl for them as Ḥarām and what Allah had called Ḥarām as Ḥalāl. Muslims were warned that they should never do that. Making things Ḥalāl and Ḥarām is the exclusive right of their Creator. Doing this on your own amounts to interference in Divine prerogatives, in fact, amounts to attributing lies to Allah Ta'ālā. Towards the end, it was also said that even those who have committed such evil deeds through ignorance should not lose hope in the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā. Should they repent and believe honestly and truly, Allah Ta'ālā will forgive all sins committed by them.

Commentary

Nature of Prohibitions: The Correct View

The restrictive particle: إِنَّمَا (*innamā*: only) appearing in verse 115 seems to give the impression that things Ḥarām are no more than the four mentioned in the verse. This impression emerges more clearly in another verse: قُلْ لَّآ أَجِدُ فِيْمَآ أُوْحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا (Say, I do not find, in what has been revealed to me, anything prohibited... - Sūrah al-An'ām, 6:145). It seems to be suggestive of nothing being Ḥarām other than the things mentioned in the verse while the fact is that according to clarifications of the Qur'ān and Sunnah and by the Consensus of the Muslim Ummah, there are many more things rated as Ḥarām. The answer to this difficulty comes through deliberation into the context of these very verses which tells us that the purpose at this place is not to describe Ḥalāl and Ḥarām as they are commonly understood. Instead, the purpose is to point out to what the *mushrikīn* of the period of Jāhiliyah had done. They had made many things Ḥarām on their own although Allah Ta'ālā had never ordered them about their unlawfulness. It amounts to saying: Out of the things you have (arbitrarily) made out as Ḥarām, only that which is really Ḥarām is being mentioned here. A comprehensive explanation of this verse along with a detailed description of these four prohibitions has appeared in the Commentary of Sūrah al-Baqarah, Mā'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume I, pages 424-438, under Verses 173-174. Those interested may see it there.

Repentance from Sin brings Forgiveness: Is it Open or Restricted?

In the last verse (119): ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِيْنَ عَمِلُوا السُّوْٓءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ (Then your Lord - for

those who did evil through ignorance ...), it will be noticed that the sense of ignorance has been conveyed by the use of the word: جَهَالَة (*jahālah*), not: جَهْل (*jahl*). As for the word: جَهْل (*jahl*), it is employed as an antonym of: عِلم (*'ilm*: knowledge) and releases the sense of a lack of knowledge or understanding while the word: جَهَالَة (*jahālah*) denotes acting ignorantly - even if done knowingly. This tells us that the forgiveness of sins through Taubah (repentance) is not restricted to a situation where a sin is committed with lack of understanding or volition. (Rather, a true *taubah* or repentence may forgive all sins, even though committed deliberately).

Verses 120 - 124

إِنَّ إِبْرٰهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِّلّٰهِ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾
شَاكِرًا لِّأَنْعُمِهِ ۚ اجْتَبٰهُ وَهَدٰهُ إِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٢١﴾ وَآتَيْنٰهُ فِى
الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً ۖ وَإِنَّهُ فِى الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصّٰلِحِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا
إِلَيْكَ أَنِ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرٰهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ إِنَّمَا
جُعِلَ السَّبْتُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ ۚ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ
الْقِيٰمَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

Surely, Ibrāhīm was an Ummah (a whole community in himself), devoted to Allah, a man of pure faith; and he was not among the Mushriks (those who associate partners with Allah) [120] **while he was grateful to His bounties. He chose him and led him to the straight path.** [121]

And We gave him good in this world; and in the Hereafter, he is among the righteous. [122]

Then, We revealed to you, "Follow the way of Ibrāhīm, the upright, and he was not among the Mushriks". [123]

The Sabbath was appointed only for those who differed in it. And your Lord will certainly judge between them on the Day of Resurrection in what they used to dispute. [124]

Sequence of Verses

Refuted in the previous verses was the root of Shirk and Kufr which

is rejection of the reality of Allah's Oneness and the rejection of the mandate given by Him to His prophet. Also refuted there were some offshoots of Kufr and Shirk in the form of legalizing the illegal and illigalizing the legal, a virtual reversal of Divinely ordained arrangements. Since the Mushriks of Makkah who were the first direct addressees of the Holy Qur'ān and who, despite their infidelity and idol-worship, claimed that they were adherents of the great community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and that what they did was all in accordance with his teachings, it was also taken up as due. The rejection of their position came on the basis of what they already believed in.

So, in the first (120) of the five verses cited above, it was said that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was the foremost universal leader of nations with the high station of a prophet and messenger of Allah. This proves that he was a great prophet and messenger. Then, by saying: وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ (and he was not among the Mushriks...120) along with it, his being a torch bearer of the most perfect belief in the Oneness of Allah was confirmed.

And in the second verse (121), by saying that he was grateful to Allah and was on the straight path, a warning signal was given to his adversaries who claimed to be his followers - how could they, being as ungrateful as they were, had the cheek to call themselves his adherents and followers?

After that it was said in the third verse (122) that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm was successful in Dunyā and 'Ākhirah and then it was said in the fourth verse (123) that the prophetic mission of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ was true and that he was truly committed to the ideal of the authentic community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. After having stated these two premises, the instruction given was: your claim cannot be correct without faith in and obedience to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

In the fifth verse (124): إِنَّمَا جُعِلَ السَّبْتُ (The Sabbath was appointed only for those...) the hint given is that good things you, on your own, have made unlawful for yourself were really not unlawful in the community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

Commentary

The word: أمة (*ummah*) has a few other meanings, but the well-known

sense is that of community, nation, or group of people. At this place, this is what it means - as reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. The sense is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm is, in his person, a community, a nation, almost a compendium of their perfections and merits. There is another meaning of the word: أمة (*ummah*), that of the leader of a community, someone imbibing in his person many perfections. Some commentators have taken exactly this meaning of the word at this place. And the word: قانت (*qānit*) in verse 120 means obedient to the command (of his Creator). Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ has distinct status in these two qualities. As for being a leader, people from all famous Faiths of the world believe in him and consider it an honour to be the followers of his community. Of course, the Jews, the Chistians and the Muslims rever him. Even the Mushriks of Arabia, despite their idol-worship, felt proud to believe in him and in (supposedly) following his way (the way of someone who was the foremost idol-breaker in human annals)! As for the signal distinction of his being '*qānit*' (obedient), it becomes crystal clear from the trials this 'friend' (*khalīl*) of Allah has gone through. Imagine the fire of Namrūd (Nimrod), the Command to go elsewhere leaving behind his family in a wilderness, and then, his being ready to sacrifice his very dear son. All these are singularities because of which Allah Ta'ālā has honoured him with such epithets.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ being on the way of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ: Understanding the Chemistry of Adherence

When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ appeared, Allah Ta'ālā blessed him with a Sharī'ah and its Injunctions. When the Last of the Prophets ﷺ appeared, his Shari'ah too - with the exception of some particular Injunctions - was laid out in accordance with it. Though, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is preferred as more distinguished (*afḍal*) of all blessed prophets and messengers, but at this place, there are two wise considerations in asking the preferred (*afḍal*) to follow the one not so preferred (*mafḍūl*) in the present context. (1) Since that Shari'ah has come into the world earlier and is already known and recognized and as the last Sharī'ah was also to be in accord with that, therefore, this similarity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to the way of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ was expressed through the word: إتباع (*ittibā'*: following). (2) As said by 'Allāmah al-Zamakhsharī (author of Tafsīr Al-Kashshāf), this command to follow too is a special tribute

out of the many honours and tributes attributed to the 'friend' of Allah, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. That it is so special has been hinted through the use of the word: ثم (*thumma*: Then - 123). The sense being conveyed is: Certainly great are all those merits and perfections of the person of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm as they are, but the most superior of all these is the fact that Allah Ta'ālā has asked his preferred-most and the dearest *rasūl* to follow his way.

Verses 125 - 128

اُدْعُ إِلٰى سَبِيْلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِىْ
هِىَ اَحْسَنُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَاَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ وَهُوَاَعْلَمُ
بِالْمُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿۱۲۵﴾ وَاِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوْا بِمِثْلِ مَاعُوْقِبْتُمْ بِهٖ ؕ وَلَئِنْ
صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِّلصّٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۲۶﴾ وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ اِلاَّ بِاللّٰهِ
وَلَاتَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُ فِىْ ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۷﴾ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَ
الَّذِيْنَ اتَّقَوْا وَّالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ مُّحْسِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۸﴾ ع

Invite (people) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good counsel. And argue with them in the best of manners. Surely, your Lord knows best the one who strays from His way, and He knows best the ones who are on the right path. [125]

And if you were to harm them in retaliation, harm them to the measure you were harmed. And if you opt for patience, it is definitely much better for those who are patient. [126]

And be patient. And your patience is bestowed by none but Allah. And do not grieve over them, and do not be in distress for what they devise. [127] **Surely, Allah is with those who fear Him and those who are good in deeds.** [128]

Sequence of Verses

In the previous verses, by attesting to the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as prophet and messenger of Allah, the purpose was to induce his people to follow what he commanded them with and thus do

their bounden duty towards their Divinely ordained *rasul*. In the verses cited above, the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself is being taught how to fulfill the rights of his mission as a messenger of Allah and how to observe the related etiquette as due - the generality of which includes and covers all true believers.

Commentary

Da'wah and Tablīgh: Principles and Curriculum

Embedded in this verse (125) there lies a whole curriculum of Da'wah and Tablīgh, its principles and rules of etiquette, within the frame of a few words. As in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, when Haram ibn Ḥayyān's رحمه الله تعالى time of death came near, his relatives asked him for some *waṣīyyah* (order, parting advice, will). In reply, he said, "*Waṣīyyah*? That people make for *māl* (wealth, property, inheritance), which I do not have. But, I would still make a *waṣīyyah*, that of the *āyāt* of Allah, particularly that of the last verses of Sūrah an-Naḥl - and I order you to stand firm on them." The verses mentioned here are the same as appear above.

Literally, دَعْوَة : *da'wah*, means to call. The first duty of the blessed prophets is to call people towards Allah. After that, what they teach as prophets and messengers are explanations of this Da'wah. The Qur'ān mentioning a special attribute of the Holy Prophet has called him: اَلدَّاعِی (one who invites people towards Allah):

وَدَاعِيًا إِلَى اللّٰهِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَسِرَاجًا مُّنِيرًا

And one who invites towards Allah with His permission whilst being a lamp, lighted. (al-Aḥzāb, 33:460)

يٰقَوْمَنَآ اَجِيْبُوْا دَاعِيَ اللّٰهِ

O our people, respond to the Caller of Allah (Prophet Muhammad ﷺ). (al-Aḥqāf, 46:31)

Calling people towards Allah (دَعْوَة اِلَى الله : *da'wah ilal-lah*) has been made obligatory on the Muslim Ummah following in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It was said in Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اُمَّةٌ يَّدْعُوْنَ اِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَاْمُرُوْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

And there has to be a group of people from among you who call towards the good... (3:104)

And in another verse, it was said:

وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ قَوْلاً مِّمَّنْ دَعَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ

And who is better in utterance than the one who called (people) towards Allah. (Hā Mīm as-Sajdah/Fuṣṣilat, 41:33)

While expressing the general sense, this word may take several forms, such as: دَعْوَةٌ اِلَى اللّٰه (*da'wah ilal-lah*: Calling towards Allah), دَعْوَةٌ اِلَى الْخَيْرِ (*da'wah ilā al-khair*: Calling toward the good) and دَعْوَةٌ اِلَى سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ (*da'wah ilā sabīlillāh*: Calling towards the way of Allah). However, the outcome is the same because calling towards Allah is actually calling towards His *dīn* and the Straight Path.

The next phrase: اِلَى سَبِيْلِ رَبِّكَ (*ilā sabīli rabbik*: to the way of your Lord) carries two nuances of expression. Here, by mentioning the special attribute of the Most Exalted Allah - '*Rabb*' - and then by annexing it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, a hint has been given that the work of Da'wah is connected with the attribute of nurture, raising, training and education. Here, it is being suggested to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the way Allah Ta'ālā has nurtured him, he too should invite people using the mores of nurture and education. It should be a Da'wah in which due consideration is given to the nature and attending circumstances of the addressee and the ultimate approach has to be such as would not weigh heavy on the recepient, rather, should be as effective as is possible. The word: دعوة (*da'wah*) itself imparts this sense in that the mission of a prophet is not simply limited to conveying the injunctions of Allah and making people hear them. Instead, his mission is to invite people to implement these in their lives. And it is obvious that no one inviting someone to Allah would present his submission in a manner which causes distraction and aversion or in which the addressee has been maligned or mocked at.

The expression: بِالْحِكْمَةِ (*bil-ḥikmah*: with wisdom) which follows immediately has been used in the Holy Qur'ān for several meanings. At this place, some Tafsīr authorities have taken: اَلْحِكْمَة (*al-ḥikmah*) to mean the Holy Qur'ān, some others explain it as the Qur'ān and Sunnah, still others call it the binding argument while Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has given the following Tafsīr of '*al-ḥikmah*' with reference to al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ:

انها الكلام الصواب الواقع من النفس اجمل موقع

It is sound speech which goes into one's heart. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

This Tafsīr assimilates all above views. The author of Rūḥ al-Bayān has also carried almost the same sense in the following words:

> "Al-Ḥikmah means the insight through which one finds out the dictates of circumstances and talks as appropriate relatively, chooses such time and occasion as would not put a burden on the addressee, employs lenience where lenience is called for and firmness where firmness is in order. And where he thinks the addressee would be embarassed by saying something frankly, there he should use hints to communicate, or employ a change of subject and approach in a way that neither embarasses the addressee nor feeds him with the thought of sticking by his prejudice."

The next word: اَلْمَوْعِظَه (*al-maw'iẓah*) or: وَعْظ (*wa'ẓ*) literally means to say something in the spirit of wishing well in a manner that would make the heart of the addressee softened and arable, all tuned to accept it. Once this is done, it will be useful to talk about the reward and benefit of such acceptance, as well as, about the punishment and ill-effects of not accepting it. (Al-Qāmūs and al-Mufradāt of Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī)

Later, by saying: اَلْحَسَنَه (*al-ḥasanah*: good), the sense conveyed is that the subject and treatment of this counsel should be such as would satisfy the heart of the addressee, removing doubts and apprehensions whereby the addressee comes to realize that you have no personal motive behind your approach and that you are addressing him only in the interest of the addressee and for his or her good.

We may stay with the word: اَلْمَوْعِظَه (*al-maw'iẓah*: counsel) for a while and say that it had already made it clear that this wishing well has to be in an effective manner. But, experience bears out that sometimes while wishing well for someone, the approach could become hurtful or insulting for the addressee. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). In order that people would leave this kind of approach, the word: اَلْحَسَنَه (*al-ḥasanah*: good) was added.

The word: جَادِل (*jādil*: argue) in the subsequent sentence: وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ أَحْسَنُ (And argue with them in the best of manners) has been derived from: مُجَادَلَه (*mujādala*). At this place, it means argumentation and debate and: بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ أَحْسَنُ (And argue with them in the best of manners) means that should there be, in the process of Da'wah, the need to engage in debate or exchange of arguments, then, that discussion should also be in the best of manners. It appears in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī that good manners

require a gentle and soft approach in mutual submissions, arguments have to be such as would be easily understood by the addressee, arguments have to be supported by known premises so that they help remove the doubts of the addressee and shields him against falling into dogmatism. And there are other verses of the Qur'ān which bear witness to the fact that this approach of showing good manners in debate (*al-iḥsān fi al-mujādalah*) is not restricted to Muslims alone. About the people of the Book (Jews and Christians), the Qur'ān particularly says:

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوٓا اَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ

And do not argue with the People of the Book except in a manner which is the best. (al-'Ankabūt, 29:46)

And in another verse, by giving the instruction of: قُوْلَا لَهٗ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا (speak to him in gentle words (Ṭā-Hā, 20:44) to Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn عليهما السلام, it was also stressed that this was how they have to deal even with as rebellious an infidel as the Pharaoh.

Da'wah: Principles and Etiquette

To sum up, three things have been mentioned in verse 125 as necessary for Da'wah:

1. Al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom)

2. Al-Maw'iẓah al-Ḥasanah (Good Counsel)

3. Al-Mujādalah - '*billati hiya aḥsan*' (Debate in the Best of Manners)

Some commentators have said that these things are there because of three kinds of addressees. Inviting with wisdom is for people of knowledge and understanding. Inviting with good counsel is for common people. Argument and debate are for those who nurse doubts in their hearts, or simply refuse to accept anything said to them because of hostility and obstinacy.

My mentor and master, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has said in his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān that it is far out to deduce from the context of the verse that the addressees of these three things are groups of three different kinds, separate from each other.

In the light of the above what seems to be obvious here is that these rules of etiquette in Da'wah are to be used for everyone. The first thing

to do in Da'wah is to wisely assess conditions surrounding the addressee and pick out the most appropriate thing to say in those terms. Then, what has to be said will certainly be said as a well-wisher, however, this empathy has to be strengthened by such evidences and proof as would satisfy the addressee. And the subject matter and the manner of presentation has to be kept soft and affectionate so that the addressee becomes certain about whatever is being said and starts feeling that this person is saying it in his interest and for his benefit, and that the speaker's purpose is not to embarass him or belittle his status.

However, the author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī has made a subtle point at this place. According to him, the arrangement of the verse shows that there are really no more than two things in Da'wah: (1) Al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom) and (2) Al-Maw'iẓah (Good Counsel). The third thing: Al-Mujādalah (Argument,Debate) is just not included under the Principles of Da'wah. But, it can be conceded that it does come out handy once in a while in the path of Da'wah.

The author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī proves his point by saying: If these three things were to be the Principles of Da'wah, the exigency of the situation required that all three should have been enumerated with the help of conjunctions as: بالحكمة والموعظة الحسنة والجدال الاحسن But, the Holy Qu'ran has elected to say al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom) and al-Maw'iẓah (Good Counsel) with conjunctive words in one single arrangement while, for al-Mujādalah, it has chosen to have a separate sentence: جَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِىْ هِىَ اَحْسَنُ (And argue with them in the best of manners). This tells us that argument in matters of knowledge is not a basic element or condition of the Call to Allah (*da'wah ilal-lāh*). Instead, it is an instruction concerning matters that come up in the path of Da'wah - an example of which appears in the next verse where patience has been enjoined because it is inevitable to observe patience over pains inflicted by people while in the path of Da'wah.

In short, there are two principles of Da'wah - (1) Al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom) and (2) Al-Maw'iẓah (Good Counsel). No Da'wah - whether to the learned and the classes or to the masses of people - should remain without these two factors. However, one has to face the kind of people who are neck-deep into doubts and superstitions and more than ready to start a debate with the Dā'ī (the man of Da'wah), it is to meet such situa-

tions that a go ahead signal to engage in the exercise of Al-Mujādalah (argument, debate) has been given. But, by imposing the restriction of: بِالَّتِیْ هِیَ اَحْسَنُ (in the best of manners) along with it, it was made very clear that the Mujādalah devoid of this condition has no place and status in the Sharī'ah.

The Prophetic Etiquette of Da'wah

Inviting people towards Allah is, in fact, the mission and station of the blessed prophets, may peace be upon them all. The rightly-guided 'Ulamā' of the Muslim community carry out this mission in their capacity of being their deputies. So, it is incumbent on them that they should learn its etiquette and methodology from them alone. A *da'wah* that does not follow those methods faithfully does not remain what *da'wah* really is. Instead, it turns into *'adāwah* (enmity) and becomes the cause of subsequent confrontations and wars.

An instruction of the Holy Qur'ān given to Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn علیهما السلام in Sūrah Ṭā-Hā illustrates the principle observed by prophets in their Call: فَقُوْلَا لَهٗ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهٗ يَتَذَكَّرُ اَوْيَخْشٰى (Speak to him in gentle words, may be he takes to the advice or fears - 20:44). This is a principle no Caller to Truth (*dā'ī ila al-Ḥaqq*) should ever lose sight of. Let him always bear in mind that the Pharaoh was an infidel (*kāfir*) known for his rebellion, one whose death was to come, as in ultimate Divine knowledge, while he was still a *kāfir*. Now, when Allah Ta'ālā sends his man of the Call even to a disbelieving tyrant like the Pharaoh, He sends him with the instruction of talking to him gently. Today, the people we invite to Allah, to His Faith, they are not more astray than the Pharaoh. Then, none of us can claim to match Sayyidnā Mūsā and Hārūn علیهما السلام as great guides and callers to the way of Allah. So, the right that Allah did not give to the two of his prophets - that they hurl hard talk on the addressee, throw taunts at him and insult him - where in the world did we get that right from?

The Holy Qur'ān is full of the Da'wah and Tablīgh of the noble prophets علیهم السلام and the contestations of disbelievers. Nowhere in there we find that any messenger of Allah has ever responded with a single unpleasant word against those who threw taunts at them despite their being on the side of the Truth. Let us have a look at some relevant examples.

The words spoken by two prophets, Sayyidnā Nūḥ and Sayyidnā Hūd عليهما السلام in response to the confrontation and sharp accusations of their people are worth noticing. These can be seen in the seventh section of Sūrah al-A'rāf from verses 59 to 67.

Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام is the great prophet known for his high determination and long blessed years in this world. For nine hundred and fifty years he devoted his life to Da'wah, Tablīgh, Reform and Enlightenment among his people. But, with the exception of a few, no one from among his people listened to him. Leave the rest, even his son and wife remained on the side of disbelievers. Had a modern day Reformer been in his place, imagine how he would have talked to such a people! Just imagine and then see what those people said in response to his Call in their interest and for their benefit. They said:

إِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ

"Indeed we see you in an obvious error" - al-A'rāf, 7:60.

On the other side, there is a prophet of Allah. He skips the option of chastizing his evil and contumacious people and this is what he elects to say:

يٰقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِيْ ضَلٰلَةٌ وَّلٰكِنِّيْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

"O my people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds" [telling you what is good for you] - al-A'rāf, 7:61.

The other messenger of Allah who came after him was Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام. His people, despite having seen the messenger's miracles, chose to remain hostile. They said, "you have yet to come up with a proof for your claim and we are not the kind of people who would abandon their objects of worship (idols) just because you say so. The fact is that you have been irreverant in respect of our idols and that is why you have gone crazy."

Having heard all this, Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام responded by saying:

إِنِّيْٓ أُشْهِدُ اللّٰهَ وَاشْهَدُوْٓا أَنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ

"I make Allah my witness, and you witness that I have nothing to do with what you take as gods besides Him" - Hūd, 11:54.

And as in Sūrah al-A'rāf, to him his people said:

إِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِى سَفَاهَةٍ وَّإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِيْنَ

"Indeed, we see you in foolishness, and we certainly believe you to be one of the liars" - 7:66.

In response to these heart-rending words used against him by his people, the messenger of Allah, Sayyidnā Hūd, blessings and peace on him, does not even think of some sharp repartee, some derogatory counter comment, or say anything which would bring into focus their waywardness and their ugly penchant for attributing lies to Allah. He does nothing of that sort. Yet, he gives the answer and what an answer! He simply said:

يٰقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِىْ سَفَاهَةٌ وَّلٰكِنِّىْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

"O my people, there is no foolishness in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds" - al-A'rāf, 7:67.

Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام invited his people to Allah in accordance with customary practice of prophets. They were addicted to the evil practice of weighing less and measuring short. When Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام asked them to refrain from it, his people made fun of him and asked him in biting contempt:

يٰشُعَيْبُ اَصَلٰوتُكَ تَاْمُرُكَ اَنْ نَّتْرُكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ اٰبَآؤُنَآ اَوْ اَنْ نَّفْعَلَ فِىْٓ اَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشٰٓؤُا اِنَّكَ لَاَنْتَ الْحَلِيْمُ الرَّشِيْدُ

They said, "O Shu'aib, does your *ṣalāh* (prayer) command you that we should give up what our fathers used to worship or give up our free will in (spending) our wealth? You are provenly the man of wisdom and guidance" - Hūd, 11:87.

Here, they have said three things. They open with a taunt: This prayer that you make teaches you to do all those foolish things. Then they talk about their *māl* - wealth, property, commercial interests: This is ours. We buy. We sell. What do you have to do with our financial matters? And for that matter, how does your God come into this? All this belongs to us and we have the right of spending it as we wish. The last sentence they say is loaded with black humour and angry sarcasm - you are certainly wise, guided-right!

It seems as if the contemporary votaries of secular economy did not rise only in our time. They do have their forbears in the past whose theo-

retical assumptions were the same as is being dished out today by some Muslims carrying nothing but Muslim names. So, they would say that they were Muslims, they believed in Islam but when it comes to an economic order, they adopt socialism (or capitalism) for, as they would like to believe, this area is out of bounds for Islam.

Returning to what his people said to Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, let us now see how the messenger of Allah responds to the sarcastic remarks made by his unjust people:

قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّىْ وَرَزَقَنِىْ مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا ؕ وَمَآ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اُخَالِفَكُمْ اِلٰى مَآ اَنْهٰكُمْ عَنْهُ ؕ اِنْ اُرِيْدُ اِلَّا الْاِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ ؕ وَمَا تَوْفِيْقِىْٓ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ ؕ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَاِلَيْهِ اُنِيْبُ

He said, "O my people, tell me, if I am on a clear path from my Lord and He has provided me from Himself with a good provision, (should I still leave you unguided?) And I do not want to do in your absence what I prohibit for you. I want nothing but to set things right as far as I can. And what I am enabled to do is only with the help of Allah. In Him alone I have placed my trust and to Him alone I turn in humbleness" - Hūd, 11:88

Despite that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, when sent to the Pharaoh, had fully complied with the Divine instruction of talking to him gently, the response of the Pharaoh to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام came in the following words:

قَالَ اَلَمْ نُرَبِّكَ فِيْنَا وَلِيْدًا وَّلَبِثْتَ فِيْنَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ سِنِيْنَ وَفَعَلْتَ فَعْلَتَكَ الَّتِىْ فَعَلْتَ وَاَنْتَ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ

He said, "(You!) Did we not raise you among us as a child, and you stayed among us for years of your life? And you did your deed which you did, and you were of the unfidels " - ash-Shu'arā', 26:18,19.

Here, the Pharaoh has reminded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام of two favours done to him - that he raised him as a child and that he stayed with him for a number of years while older. Then he showed his displeasure over the incident in which a Copt got killed at the hands of Sayyidnā Mūsā, though he had no intention of killing him. In his anger, he also said that he had become an infidel.

At this place, the expression: اَنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِيْنَ (*anta min al-kāfirīn*) could

be taken in the literal sense, that is, one who is ungrateful, which would mean: 'we did favours to you and you killed one of our men, a demonstration of ungratefulness to favours done.' Then, it could also be given a technical meaning because the Pharaoh claimed to be god. So, whoever denied his godhead turned out to be a *kāfir* (infidel).

Now, at this juncture, let us hear the answer given by Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ which is a masterpiece of prophetic manners and morals of Da'wah. Here, first of all, he goes ahead and makes a clean breast of what had happened to him. He had tried to disengage a Copt who was fighting an Israelite man. The punch he had employed to do that caused his death. So, this killing was not intentional. But, it was also not prompted by some religious exigency. In fact, even under the Law of Moses, that man was not deserving of being killed. Therefore, he began by confessing first and said:

فَعَلْتُهَآ إِذًا وَّأَنَا مِنَ الضَّآلِّينَ

"I did it then, while I was of the astray (ignorant)" - ash-Shu'arā', 26:20.

The sense is that the act had escaped him before he was blessed with the mission of a prophet and at a time when he was not aware of any Divine command about it. After that, he said:

فَفَرَرْتُ مِنكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ فَوَهَبَ لِى رَبِّى حُكْمًا وَّجَعَلَنِى مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

"So I fled from you when I feared you. Then my Lord bestowed wisdom on me and made me of His messengers" - 26:21.

After that, Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ took up the reality of favours the Pharaoh was harping on. He told him that he was not right in doing that because this whole matter of bringing him up was the result of his own cruelty and oppression in that it was he who had a standing order in force, the order to kill Israelite children. His mother was, therefore, compelled to put him into the river until came the time when he reached his home. He said:

وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَىَّ أَنْ عَبَّدتَّ بَنِىٓ إِسْرَآءِيلَ

"And this is the favour you put on me - that you have enslaved the Children of Isrā'īl! - 26:22.

After that, when the Pharaoh asked: وَمَا رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ("And what is the Lord of the worlds?" - 26:23), he replied by saying: رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ("The Lord of the heavens and the earth and of whatever there is in between them" - 26:24). Thereupon, it was by way of mockery that the Pharaoh turned towards the audience and asked: ... ("Do you not hear?" - 26:25) [meaning: You hear him, don't you? Hasn't he gone out of his mind?] Thereupon, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام added:

رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ اٰبَآئِكُمُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ

"Your Lord and the Lord of your first forefathers" - 26:26

Irritated, the Pharaoh said:

اِنَّ رَسُوْلَكُمُ الَّذِیْٓ اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُوْنٌ

"Indeed, your messenger (who claims to have been) sent to you is a mad man" - 26:27.

Even such a derogatory title given to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did not lure him into a blow for blow response for he could have easily told the Pharaoh as to who was insane and who was sane. He just took no notice of it, in fact, went on to describe another attribute of Allah, the Lord of the worlds:

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ

"Lord of the East and the West and of whatever there is in between them, if you were to comprehend" - 26:28.

This is a lengthy dialogue taking place in the court of the Pharaoh between him and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. It covers three sections of Sūrah ash-Shu'arā' (26). Look at this dialogue of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام from the beginning to the end. No emotions are betrayed here. No reply has been given to his bad words, nor is his hard talk matched by counter hard talk. Instead of all that, there is a continuous flow of statements to the effect of Allah Ta'ālā's attributes of perfection along with the ongoing efforts of Tablīgh.

This is a brief sample of the confrontations in which the blessed prophets have stood up against their hostile and obstinate people. We can also say that it is a practical demonstration of 'arguing with the best of manners.'

Besides argumentations, debates and intellectual confrontations when inevitable, models have been set by the blessed prophets in Da'wah and Tablīgh on a standing basis. They have established wise principles in human communications as appropriate to different addressees and different occasions with the added considerations as dictated by wisdom or beneficial expediency. In short, the way and method put in practice by the blessed prophets in order to invite people to Allah (*da'wah ilal-lāh*) and make it popular, effective and abiding as well is, in reality, the essence and spirit of Da'wah. As for its details, these are spread all over in the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Let us have a look at some of these as representative samples.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ was very particular about making sure that no burden is placed on the addressee whether in Da'wah and Tablīgh or in good counsel and beneficial advice. As for the noble Ṣaḥābah, they held the Holy Prophet ﷺ very dear to their heart. About them, it could not be imagined that they would, God forbid, ever get bored with what he had to say. Yet, even for them, his customary practice was that he would not hold his teaching, counseling and advising sessions every day, rather limited it to some days of the week so that their occupation or business is not adversely affected or that it becomes some sort of burden on them.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, "The Holy Prophet ﷺ had his '*wa'ẓ*' sessions only on some days of the week lest we get bored - and he instructed others to do the same."

Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

يَسِّرُوْا وَلَا تُعَسِّرُوْا وَبَشِّرُوْا وَلَا تُنَفِّرُوْا

> Make (things) easy and do not make (things) difficult and give (people) the good news (of mercy from Allah) and do not disappoint or alienate (them) - Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-'Ilm.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه says, 'you should become *Rabbānī*, the people of your *Rabb*, people with wisdom, learning and law.' After reporting this saying in the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, the word: رَبَّانِي (Rabbānī) has been explained as: A person who, keeping in sight the principles of Da'wah, Tablīgh, education and training, starts with simple things first. When people get used to it, then he tells them about other

imperatives which would have been difficult at the elementary stage. This person is a Divinely guided scholar (عَالِم رَبَّانی). These days religious sermons and propagation efforts produce very little effect. The main reason is that workers in this field generally do not give due consideration to the principles and etiquette necessary in this area. Lengthy lectures, uncalled for sermonizings and insisting on people to do something without first finding out the conditions faced by the addressee have become their habit.

When engaged in the mission of Invitation and Reformation, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made an extra effort to ensure that the addressee is not insulted or disgraced in any way. Therefore, when he would see someone involved with something bad or wrong, he would not address him directly. Instead, he used to beam his remarks at a public gathering, for example, he would say:

مَابَالُ اَقْوَامٍ يَّفْعَلُوْنَ كَذَا

What has happened to people that they do so?

This used to be part of a public address. Naturally, the person who was supposed to hear it did hear it, was ashamed in his heart and went about getting rid of that drawback.

It was the universal habit of noble prophets that they shielded the addressee from being embarassed. Therefore, on occasions, they would attribute what was done by the addressee to their own selves and thus tried to set things right with their people. It appears in Sūrah Yā Sīn: وَمَا لِيَ لَآ اَعْبُدُ الَّذِیْ فَطَرَنِیْ (What is the matter with me that I would not worship Him who created me? - 36:22). As for this emissary of the messenger, he was already devoted to his *'ibādah* (worship) all the time as was his usual way. The purpose here was to make the addressee who was not so engaged hear the worth and value of turning to Allah in *'ibādah*. But, as we see, he has attributed the shortcoming to his own person.

And Da'wah means to call or bid someone to come close to the caller - definitely not to enumerate the person's shortcomings. Then, this act of calling can become effective only when there is some common ground between the caller and the called. For this reason, the Da'wah of the noble prophets ﷺ as in the Holy Qur'ān mostly begins with the words:

يٰقَوۡمِ (*yā qawmī* : O my people) through which stress is placed first on the common factor of brotherly relations and then things aiming at their betternment are said. It amounts to saying - 'we are people of the same brotherhood, so let there be no hatred in between us' - and this is how they start the mission of reforming their society.

In the letter of Da'wah sent by the Holy Prophet ﷺ to Hiraql, the Byzantine emperor, he began by calling the emperor: 'The Great Man of Byzantium.' This tribute of honour given to him was permissible because it contained a confession of the emperor's being great - though, for the people of Byzantine, not for him. After that, the manner in which the invitation to believe was given is being quoted below:

يٰٓاَهۡلَ الۡكِتٰبِ تَعَالَوۡا اِلٰى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۢ بَيۡنَنَا وَبَيۡنَكُمۡ اَلَّا نَعۡبُدَ اِلَّا اللّٰهَ

"O people of the Book, come to a word common between us and you that we worship none but Allah" (as in Sūrah Āl-'Imrān, 3:64)

Here, a common factor of unity was mentioned first. It was said that the belief in the Oneness of Allah (*Tauḥīd*) was the common bond between the two of them. After that came the reminder about the error of Christians.

If we were to look into the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ carefully, we will find similar rules of conduct in every field of Da'wah and public education. Unfortunately, in our time, we suffer from lack of concern for carrying the call to faith, working for the correction and betterment of people, bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair. Even those who are engaged in these pursuits have, (with valid exceptions) taken mere discussions, debates, accusations, name calling, berating and disgracing the adversary to be Da'wah and Tablīgh. The truth of the matter is that all this, being contrary to the Sunnah, never turns out to be effective and beneficial - while these gentlemen continue to congratulate themselves for having done a great service to Islam. In reality, they are becoming the cause of making people scared of it.

The Harmful Worldly and Other-Worldly Effects of Current Contestations

We know from the Tafsīr of the present verse (125) that the main objective of the Sharī'ah of Islām is the Call to Allah (*da'wah ilal-lāh*)

which has two principles: (1) Al-Ḥikmah (Wisdom) and (2) Al-Maw'iẓah Al-Ḥasanah (Good Counsel). And if the unwelcome need of Al-Mujādalah (argument, debate, confrontation) stands imposed on some stray occasion, then, that too has been allowed with the restriction of being 'in the best of manners.' But, in reality, it is not a regular department of Da'wah. Instead, it is a via media to handle its negative aspect. The Holy Qur'ān has resolved it by placing the restriction of: بِالَّتِی هِیَ اَحْسَنُ (in the best of manners). By doing so, it has told us that it should be in the best spirit of politeness, and with the attitude of a sympathizer and well-wisher. Argument should be formulated clearly as appropriate to the state of the addressee. Any approach which belittles or insults the addressee should be totally avoided. Similarly, for it to be the best, it is also necessary to be on guard lest it becomes harmful to the speaker himself. In other words, it should not affect his morals adversely for there is the danger of his falling into envy, malice, arrogance, love for name, fame and power. These are major inward sins. In short, the kind of discussions, debates, polemics and confrontations we see today are such that it would take a very rare person, some man of Allah, to remain safe against their harmful effects, otherwise, it is extremely difficult to find refuge from it under normal circumstances.

Imām al-Ghazālī has said: The way liquor is 'the mother of evils' (*umm-ul-khabā'ith*) in that it is a grave sin by itself and also becomes the conduit of other grave sins. Similarly, when overpowering the addressee and demonstrating one's intellectual superiority over people becomes the objective, that too becomes 'the mother of evils' for one's inward state. As a result, many spiritual crimes crop up, for example: envy, malice, arrogance, backbiting, spying on the faults of others, being pleased with their discomfort and being unhappy with their gain, haughty rejection of Truth, the attitude of not considering the position of others with justice and moderation, instead, worrying about a rebuttal, no matter how askance their enterpretations from the Qur'ān and Sunnah are.

These are dangers. Even serious religious scholars are affected by them. But, the problem is compounded when the thing starts affecting their followers when the intellectual exercise could turn into a physical one in progressive proportions. *Innā lillāhi wa innā ilaihi rāji'ūn*. Imām Shāfi'ī, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, said:

"Knowledge is a brotherhood of the learned. How do those who have turned knowledge into enmity could invite others to follow their religion? When their sole objective is to dominate over others, how could they be expected to practice mutual attachment, love and consideration? And for one what evil could be greater than that which drowns him in the morals of the hypocrites and deprives him of the morals of those who truly believe and fear Allah?"

Imām al-Ghazālī said that a person who devotes himself to the *'ilm* of *dīn* and the *da'wah* of *ḥaqq* revolves between two destinies. Either he, following correct principles and avoiding fatal dangers, achieves the eternal good; or, otherwise, if he falls down from this station, he slides into eternal misfortune. That he would remain hanging in between these two states is too far out to entertain - because, knowledge which is not beneficial is nothing but punishment. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

اَشَدُّ النَّاسِ عَذَابًا يَّوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عَالِمٌ لَّمْ يَنْفَعْهُ اللّٰهُ بِعِلْمِهٖ

On the day of Judgement, the person most severely punished, of all human beings, shall be an *'ālim* from whose knowledge Allah has not given him any benefit.

And in another Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, he said:

لَا تَتَعَلَّمُوا الْعِلْمَ لِتُبَاهُوْا بِهِ الْعُلَمَآءَ وَلِتُمَارُوْا بِهِ السُّفَهَآءَ وَلِتَصْرِفُوْا بِهٖ وُجُوْهَ النَّاسِ اِلَيْكُمْ فَمَنْ فَعَلَ ذٰلِكَ فَهُوَ فِي النَّارِ

"Do not learn the *'ilm* (of *dīn*) to compete with the learned in pride and prestige nor to challenge the incompetent with it nor to make the faces of people turn towards you therewith. So whoever will do that, will be in the fire." (Ibn Mājah, from the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Jābir with sound chains of authority as in Takhrīj al-'Irāqī 'alā al-Iḥyā')

Therefore, the standing creed (*maslak*) of authorities among Muslim jurists and the people on Truth (*ḥaqq*) in this matter was that they never considered disputation and confrontation in intellectual issues as permissible. In the mission of inviting people to the Truth, it is enough to alert anyone considered to be in error, politely and sympathetically as a well-wisher, presenting one's submission with necessary arguments. Then, should he accept, it is better. If otherwise, let him observe silence, totally avoiding altercation and adverse criticism. Let us turn to Imām Mālik رحمة الله عليه in this matter:

كَانَ مَالِكٌ يَّقُوْلُ' الْمِرَآءُ وَ الْجِدَالُ فِى الْعِلْمِ يَذْهَبُ بِنُوْرِ الْعِلْمِ عَن قَلْبِ الْعَبْدِ ـ وَقِيْلَ لَه: رَجُلٌ لَّه' عِلْمٌ بِالسُّنَّةِ' فَهَلْ يُجَادِلُ عَنْهَا؟ قَالَ: لاَ ' وَلٰكِنْ يُّخْبِرُ بِالسُّنَّةِ ' فَاِنْ قُبِلَ مِنْه' وَاِلاَّ سَكَتَ۔ (اوجزالمسالك شرح مؤطا ص١٥ ١٥)

Imām Mālik said: "Altercation and confrontation in *al-'ilm* (the knowledge of *dīn*) drives away the light of knowledge from the heart of a servant." Someone submitted: 'There is a person. who has the knowledge of Sunnah. Can he enter into debate for the protection of Sunnah?' He said, "No. But, he should inform the addressee about the Sunnah (as it is). Then, should he accept it, good - otherwise, let him observe silence." (Awjaz al-Masālik Sharḥ al-Muwaṭṭā, v. 1, page 15)

Ineffectiveness of Contemporary Da'wah Work

There are two reasons why the work of Da'wah (invitation) and Iṣlāḥ (reform) is not fully effective. (1) Firstly, because of the increase of corruption in our time and the abundance of Ḥarām things, hearts of people have become generally hard, and heedless of the Hereafter - and the very ability to accept truth has become weak and low. And there are some who find themselves suffering from the curse the foreboding of which was given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He had said that, by the later times, the hearts of many people will turn upside down, all reversed. The ability to know good from bad, and the distinction of permissible and impermissible will vanish from their heart.

(2) Then, negligence towards the duties of bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair and inviting people to the true faith has become common. Not to say much about people at large, there is not much realization of its need even among the learned and the righteous. It is assumed that correcting one's own deed is just about enough whether their children, spouse, brother, friend remain smeared with all sorts of sins. The concern for their reform and betterment is as if no responsibility of theirs - although, the definite textual statements of the Holy Qur'ān (*nuṣūṣ*) are openly declaring that the betterment of one's children, family and relatives is his responsibility: قُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَاَهْلِيْكُمْ نَارًا (Protect yourselves and your families from a Fire... - at-Taḥrīm, 66/6). As for some people who do pay attention to this duty, they do not know the teachings of the Qur'ān and the principles and manners of prophetic Da'wah. They take it easy, go by their impulse and say anything to anybody anytime without ever thinking about it. By doing so, they

surmise, they have done their duty - although, this method of action, being contrary to the blessed practice of prophets, further alienates people from the Faith and from following its dictates.

Of particular mention is the habit of finding faults with others, mocking at them or making fun of them all in the name of open criticism. Imām Shāfi'ī رحمه الله تعالى said:

> "When alerting someone to some mistake (the rule is:) If you talked to him privately, explained it politely, then, this is 'advice'; and if you disgraced him publicly, this is 'vice.'"

The publicizing of mutual defects has become so popular these days that negative advertising is being done as if it was some service rendered to the Faith. May Allah Ta'ālā bless all of us the ability to serve our Faith with the best of insight into its Da'wah and its modalities.

At this point ends our submission relating to Da'wah and its principles and etiquette.

After that, we can move on to explain the last part of verse 125: إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ (Surely, your Lord knows best the one who strays from His way, and He knows best the ones who are on the right path). This statement has been made to comfort those who carry the Call of their Faith because one is naturally shocked when the addressee does not accept the truth presented despite that all rules of Da'wah have been observed. And there are occasions when this could produce another effect. When one sees no benefit coming out of Da'wah, he can become disappointed, even leave the work itself. Therefore, in this sentence, it was said:' Your duty is only to invite people to the Truth in accordance with its correct principles. Beyond that, its acceptance or rejection is something you have nothing to do with, nor is that one of your responsibilities. That falls in the domain of Allah alone. He knows who will remain astray and who will stand guided. You should not worry about it. Go on doing your duty. Do not lose hope. Do not despair.' This tells us that this sentence too is really a complement of the etiquette of Da'wah.

Causing Pain to a Man of Da'wah: Revenge is Permissible, but Patience is Better.

The next three verses (126,127,128) carry another important instruc-

tion for those who present the message of Truth before people. It tells them about what they have to do in unusual conditions. There are occasions when they have to face people who are hard-hearted and very ignorant. No matter how softly and politely one explains things to them and no matter how much goodwill one has for them in his heart, they would, even then, go in a fit of anger, use bad language and cause pain. There are times when they would go beyond that and hurt the preacher physically or would not even mind killing. So, a remedial measure was in order.

For this purpose, by saying: وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ (And if you were to harm them in retaliation, harm them to the measure you were harmed. And if you opt for patience, it is definitely much better for those who are patient - 126), these noble workers in the way of Allah were given the legal right that it was permissible for them to retaliate against injustice done to them. But, this was to be subject to the condition that retaliation should not exceed the measure of injustice done. In other words, assess the injustice inflicted on you, retaliate only to that measure and ensure that no excess occurs.

And at the end of the verse, given there is the advice: Though, you do have the right to retaliate, but be patient and do not retaliate. It is better.

The Background in which this Verse was Revealed and How it was Implemented by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم

According to the majority of commentators, this verse is Madani. It was revealed in relation to the *shahādah* of seventy *ṣaḥābah* and about the event in which Sayyidnā Ḥamzah رضي الله عنه was killed and his body was subjected to post-killing mutilations (*muthlah*). The narration in Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī is in accordance with it. Dārquṭnī has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما as follows:

> "In the battle of Uḥud when the Mushriks marched back, the dead bodies of seventy leading *ṣaḥābah* were found. Also included there was Sayyidnā Ḥamzah رضي الله عنه, the reverred uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Since the Mushriks were particularly angry with him, therefore, once he was killed by them, they took out their anger on his dead body. His nose, ears and other

> parts of the body were cut and the abdomen was slit open. The very sight of it shocked the Holy Prophet ﷺ and he said that, to avenge Hamzah, he would have seventy men from the Mushriks subjected to a '*muthlah*' similar to what they have done to Hamzah. It was in the background of this event that these three verses were revealed (126,127,128)". (Tafsīr Qurṭubī)

It appears in some narrations that these cruel people had meted out the same treatment of '*muthlah*' (mutilation) in the case of other *ṣaḥābah* as well. (As reported by al-Tirmidhī, Aḥmad, and Ibn Khuzaimah and Ibn Ḥibbān in their Ṣaḥīḥs from Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b رضي الله عنه)

In this matter, being extremely grieved, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had declared his determination to subject seventy Mushriks in retaliation for his *ṣaḥābah* irrespective of their exact number, and this was not in accord with the principle of justice and equity Allah Ta'ālā intended to stand established in this world through him. Therefore, two things were done. (1) He was alerted and told that the right of retaliation was there but it had to match the measure of injustice done. Retaliating against seventy for a few, irrespective of their number, is not right. (2) Then, he was to be the model of morals at their best. Therefore, given to him was the good counsel: Though, you are allowed to retaliate evenly but, should you set aside this option and be patient and generous to the unjust, that would be much better.

Thereupon, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Now, patient we shall be. We shall not take any revenge from anyone" - and he paid out a *kaffārah* (expiation) for his oath. (Maẓharī from al-Baghawī) When, on the eve of the Conquest of Makkah, having all those Mushriks of Makkah under his control, it was certainly the time to do what he had declared on the battlefield of Uḥud that he would do. But, it was precisely at the time of the revelation of the cited verses that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had forsaken his earlier intention and had, instead, decided to observe patience. Therefore, at the time of the Conquest of Makkah, the course of patience was taken in accordance with the imperative of these verses. Perhaps, it is on this basis that it has been mentioned in some narration that these verses were revealed at the time of the Conquest of Makkah. And it is also not too far out to believe that the revelation of these verses was repeated, that is, initially they were revealed at the battle of 'Uḥud and

then, when came the Conquest of Makkah, they were revealed again. (as narrated by al-Maẓharī from Ibn al-Ḥaṣṣār)

RULING:

This verse has told us about the Law of Even Retaliation when avenging. Therefore, Muslim jurists say that in the event a person kills someone, the killed will be avenged by killing the killer. One who inflicts injury will have an even injury inflicted on him. Against one who cuts off someone's hand and feet, and then kills him, the guardian of the killed will be given the right that he too should first cut off the killer's hands and feet and then kill him.

Yes, if someone kills someone else by hitting him with a rock, or kills him by injuring him with arrows, then, it is not possible to determine the correct measure of the way of killing, that is, how many strikes did it take to make this killing take place, and how much pain has been inflicted on the person killed. In this matter, there is no measure of determining real equalization. Therefore, he will have to be killed invariably with a sword. (Al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

RULING:

Though the verse has been revealed in relation to physical pain and loss, but its words are general which includes the inflicting of financial loss. Therefore, Muslim jurists have said that a person who usurps *māl* (money, property etc.) belonging to another person, then, this other person has the right to forcibly take away from him his *māl* in accordance with his right, or take it by stealth on condition that the *māl* taken is from the genus of his right, for example, if cash has been taken, then, he can take, in lieu of it, the same amount of cash from him, by usurpation or theft. If things usurped are like grains, corn or cloth, then, similar grains, corn or cloth can be taken back. But, one cannot take another kind in lieu of the kind taken from him, for example, one cannot forcibly take cloth or some other article of use in lieu of cash. However, some *fuqahā'* (Muslim jurists) have permitted it unconditionally - whether it be from the entitled kind or from some other. Some details of these rules have been covered by al-Qurṭubī in his Tafsīr while more comprehensive details appear in books of Fiqh.

Mentioned in verse 126: وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ (And if you were to harm...) was the

general law in which avenging harm done with even harm was declared to be permissible for all Muslims, but taking the option of patience was recommended as definitely much better. And in the next verse (127), the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been addressed in a special manner and prompted to be patient because, in view of his great dignity and high station, the later response was certainly more appropriate and becoming for him as compared with others. Therefore, it was said: وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ (And be patient. And your patience is bestowed by none but Allah). It means: 'As for you, you just do not even contemplate a revenge. Take to Ṣabr (patience) as your only option.' And then, he was also told that his Ṣabr will come with the help of Allah alone, that is, observing Ṣabr will be made easy for him.

After that, once again in the last verse (128), a universal formula of having the help of Allah Taʽālā by one's side was announced. It is:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوا وَّالَّذِينَ هُم مُّحْسِنُونَ

> Surely, Allah is with those who fear Him and those who are good in deeds.

The essence of this formula is that the help of Allah Taʽālā is with people who have two virtues: Taqwā and Iḥsān. The essence of Taqwā is acting righteously or being good in deed while the sense of Iḥsān at this place is to be good to those created by Allah Taʽālā, that is, those who are duty-bound to do righteous deeds and are particular in dealing with others nicely - Allah Taʽālā is with them. And it is obvious, if someone is blessed with the 'company' (help) of Allah Taʽālā, who can touch him!

Alḥamdulillāh

The Tafsīr of Sūrah Al-Naḥl was completed today,
Shabān 25, 1389 Hijrah

وَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ أَوَّلًا وَّآخِرًا وَّظَاهِرًا وَّبَاطِنًا

Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl

(Al-'Isrā')

Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl is Makkī. It has 111 verses and 12 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verse 1

سُبْحٰنَ الَّذِيْٓ اَسْرٰى بِعَبْدِهٖ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ اِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ
الْاَقْصَا الَّذِيْ بٰرَكْنَا حَوْلَهٗ لِنُرِيَهٗ مِنْ اٰيٰتِنَا ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْبَصِيْرُ ﴿١﴾

Pure is He Who made his servant travel at night from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā the environs of which We have blessed, so that We let him see some of Our signs. Surely, He is the All Hearing, All Seeing. [1]

Commentary

Described in this verse is the event of Mi'rāj (the Ascent to the heavens, or al-'Isrā', the midnight journey of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which is a signal honor and distinctive miracle of our Messenger of Allah ﷺ). The word: اَسْرٰى (*asrā*) is a derivation from: اِسْرٰى (*isrā'*) which literally means to make someone travel at night. After that, the introduction of the word: لَيْلًا *(lailan)* also makes this sense very clear. Then, by placing this word as a common noun, the indication released was that during this event the time spent was that of a part of the night - not even that of the whole night. The journey from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām to al-Masjid al-Aqṣā mentioned in this verse is called al-'Isrā' and the name of the journey from here to the seven heavens is al-Mi'rāj. Isrā' stands proved under

the definitive textual authority of this verse and the Mi'rāj finds mention in the verses of Sūrah an-Najm and is proved by Aḥādīth appearing in an uninterrupted succession. The word: بِعَبْدِهٖ (*bi'abdihī*: His servant) used here for the Holy Prophet ﷺ is special. It shows that, in this magnificent setting of honor and welcome, when Allah Taʿālā, on His own, elects to call someone 'His servant', a unique bond of love lies embedded therein and that this is the highest honor any man could ever have.

This is similar to what has been said in another verse: عِبَادُ الرَّحْمٰنِ الَّذِيْنَ يَمْشُوْنَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا (and the servants of Ar-Raḥmān [the Most Merciful] are those who walk on the Earth gently - al-Furqān, 25:63) where the objective is to increase the prestige of those who are acceptable with Him. From here, we also learn that the highest achievement man is capable of is to become a perfect servant of Allah - for, on this eve of special honor, the quality of ideal servitude, out of his many attributes of perfection, was chosen. Then, the presence of this expression yields yet another beneficial outcome in that no one gets the wrong impression of divinity from this wonderful journey by night which, from its beginning to the end, is full of extra-habitual miracles. This is something like what happened with the Christians who fell into deception over the event of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام being raised unto the heavens. For this reason, by saying عَبْد (*'abd*: servant), it was declared that, despite all those attributes, achievements and miracles, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was still a servant of Allah, not god.

The Qur'ān, Sunnah and 'Ijmā' prove that the Mi'rāj was physical.

It is proved from the text of the Holy Qur'ān, and from Aḥādīth coming in uninterrupted succession mentioned later that the entire journey of the Isrā' and Mi'rāj was not simply spiritual, instead, it was physical - like the journey of anyone else. The very first word of the Holy Qur'ān in this Sūrah: سُبْحَانَ (Subḥān: Pure is He!) carries a hint in this direction because this word is used to register wonder or introduce a great marvel. Had the Mi'rāj been merely spiritual, just a matter of dream, what was there so unusual about it? As for a dream, every Muslim, even every human being, can see it and report that he or she went to the heavens, did this and did that.

The second indication embedded in the word: عَبْد (*'abd*: servant) also

points out in the same direction because *'abd* is no spirit all by itself, instead, it is the name of the combination of body and spirit.

In addition to that, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ related the event of Mi'rāj to Sayyidah Umm Hānī رضی اللہ عنہا, she advised him not to mention it before anyone otherwise people would falsify it even more. Had this been the matter of a dream, what was there in it that needed to be falsified?

After that, when he did tell people about it, the disbelievers of Makkah called it a lie and made fun of him, so much so that some neo-Muslims became apostates (*murtadd*) after hearing the news. If this would have been the matter of a dream, the likelihood of such reactions was least warranted. And that he had experienced some spiritual Mi'rāj in the form of a dream, before this or after that, does not become contrary to it. According to the majority of Muslim scholars, the word: اَلرُّءْيَا (*ar-ru'yā*) in the verse of the Qur'ān: وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّءْيَا الَّتِىٓ اَرَيْنٰكَ (And We showed you the scene - 17:60) means: رُؤْيَه (*rūyah*: seeing). But, it has been expressed through the word: رُؤْيَا (*ru'yā*, which is frequently used in the sense of seeing a dream). The reason for this expression could be that this thing has been called *ru'yā* in the sense of a simile. This is like someone seeing a dream. And if, *ru'yā* is taken to mean dream itself, then, it is also not too far out to say that the event of Mi'rāj, in addition to its being physical, also transpired, before or after it, in the form of a spiritual Mi'rāj as a dream as well. Therefore, the saying, that it was a dream, reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbas رضی اللہ عنہ and Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا is also correct in its place - but, it does not necessarily imply that physical Mi'rāj did not take place.

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that the Aḥādīth relating to the event of al-Isrā' are recurrent and uninterrupted. Naqqāsh has reported related narratives from twenty Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ has given additional details in Al-Shifā' (Qurṭubī).

Imām Ibn Kathīr has, in his Tafsīr, reported all these narratives and after applying the standard rules of scrutiny has mentioned the names of twenty-five Ṣaḥābah from whom these reports come. Their names are:

(1) Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb,
(2) Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā,

(3) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd,
(4) Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī,
(5) Sayyidnā Mālik ibn Ṣa'ṣa'ah,
(6) Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah,
(7) Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī,
(8) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās,
(9) Sayyidnā Shaddād ibn Aws,
(10) Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b,
(11) Sayyidnā 'Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn al-Qurāẓ,
(12) Sayyidnā Abū Ḥayyah (ابوحيه),
(13) Sayyidnā Abū Lailā,
(14) Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar,
(15) Sayyidnā Jabīr ibn 'Abdullāh,
(16) Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ibn Yamān,
(17) Sayyidnā Buraidah,
(18) Sayyidnā Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī,
(19) Sayyidnā Abū 'Umāmah,
(20) Sayyidnā Samurah ibn Jundub,
(21) Sayyidnā Abū al-Ḥamrā',
(22) Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb al-Rūmī,
(23) Sayyidah Umm Ḥānī',
(24) Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah,
(25) Sayyidah Asmā' bint Abī Bakr, ... After that, Ibn Kathīr said:

فَحَدِيْث الاسراءِ اجمع عليه المسلمون واعرض عنه الزنا دقة والملحدون (ابن كثير)

As for the Ḥadīth of al-Isrā', there is a consensus of all Muslim on it. Only heretics and atheists have denied it. (Ibn Kathīr)

A brief account of Mi'rāj - as reported by Ibn Kathīr

After having explained the present verse in his Tafsīr along with a detailed background of relevant Aḥādīth, Imām Ibn Kathīr has said: The truth of the matter is that the journey of Isrā' came to pass when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was awake, not dreaming. From Makkah al-Mukarramah to Baitulmaqdis, the journey was covered on *burāq* (a special heavenly horse to ride). When he reached the gate of Baitulmaqdis, he tied the *burāq* close to the gate, entered the Masjid of Baitulmaqdis and offered two *rak'āt* of Taḥiyyatul-masjid (prayer in honor of the Mosque) facing its orientation. After that, a staircase was

brought which had steps to go up from below. Through this staircase, he went to the first heaven. After that, he went to the rest of the heavens. [Only Allah knows the reality of this staircase - what it was and how did it work and things like that. In our day too, many kinds of stairs are in use. There are stairs that escalate automatically and there are elevators that take one up. Therefore, falling into any doubt or suspicion about this miraculous staircase is not right.] On every heaven, the resident angels greeted him and on every heaven, he met blessed prophets who were stationed on a particular heaven, such as, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام on the sixth heaven, and Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah عليه السلام on the seventh heaven. After that, he went beyond the stations of all these blessed prophets and reached a plain where he could hear the sound of the pen writing destinies. And he saw the Sidratul-muntaha, the Far Tree in Jannah, on which moths in gold and variegated colors were falling from above by the command of Allah and which was surrounded by angels of Allah. And it was at this place that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn in his real form with six hundred wings. And right there, he saw a flag in green that had the horizon all covered up. And he also saw al-Bayt al-Ma'mūr (the well-attended House believed to be located in Jannah exactly above the Baytullah in Makkah) sitting by which was the founder of the Ka'bah, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام with his back reclining against its wall. Seventy thousand angels enter this Bayt al-Ma'mūr every day who shall be waiting for their turn to re-enter there right through the day of Qiyāmah. And the Holy Prophet عليه السلام saw the Jannah and the Jahannam with his own blessed eyes. At that time, first came the command that his people were being obligated with fifty prayers, then, these were reduced to five. This shows the importance and merit of Ṣalāh as being the foremost out of all acts of 'Ibādah.

After that, he alighted back into Baytul-maqdis and, with him, so did the blessed prophets he had met on different heavens (as if) they had come to see him off as far as Baytul-maqdis. At that time, as it was time for Ṣalāh, he offered the prayer with all prophets. It is also probable that this Ṣalāh was the Ṣalāh of Fajr the same day. Ibn Kathīr says that this event concerning the prayer with prophets led by the Holy Prophet ﷺ has come to pass, as held by some, before he went to the heavens. But, as obvious, this event took place after the return because it has been re-

ported in the incident relating to his meeting with blessed prophets at different heavens that it was Sayyidnā Jibra'īl who introduced him to all prophets. Had this event relating to his leading the prayer passed earlier, no introduction was needed there - and, for that matter, it is obvious enough that the real purpose of this journey was to visit with the heavenly hosts. Doing that first appears to be more likely. Once he was done with the real mission, all prophets came to say good bye to him up to Baytul-maqdis and by making him the Imām of the prayer through a signal from Sayyidnā Jibra'īl, his precedence over others was demonstrated practically.

After that, he departed from Baytul-maqdis riding *burāq* and reached Makkah al-Mu'azzamah while it was still dark. والله سبحانه تعالى اعلم (And Allah, the Pure and the High, knows best).

The testimony of a non-Muslim about the event of Mi'rāj

It appears in Tafsīr ibn Kathīr that Ḥāfiẓ Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī, in his book, Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah, has reported a narrative from Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Quraẓi on the authority of Muḥammad ibn 'Amr al-Wāqidi* giving details of the event as follows:

The Holy Prophet ﷺ sent Sayyidnā Diḥyah ibn Khalīfah ؓ with a blessed letter from him to the Roman Emperor, Caesar. After that, he has given a detailed account of how Sayyidnā Diḥyah reached the Emperor, delivered the letter, and how intelligent he was in his mission (an event present in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī as well as in all trustworthy books of Ḥadīth). Towards the end of it, it has been reported that Hiraql, the Roman Emperor, once he had read the blessed letter, ordered that all Arab traders who were visiting the country at that time should be assembled together. He wanted to investigate into the background of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The royal order was carried out. Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb and those with him visiting Syria at that time with their famous trade caravan were presented before the Emperor. Details of the questions asked by the Emperor are present in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, as well as elsewhere. Abū Sufyān was really

*. The Scholars of Ḥadīth say that Al-Wāqidi is weak in Ḥadīth narrations but a cautious Muḥaddith like Imām Ibn Kathīr has reported his narration for the reason that this matter is not connected with 'Aqā'id or Ḥalāl and Ḥarām and in such historical matters his narration is trustworthy - **Muḥammad Shafi'**

eager to use this occasion to say things about the Holy Prophet ﷺ which show his insignificance. But, says Abū Sufyān : Nothing stopped me from doing that except that I may slip and say something which turns out to be a lie and I stand disgraced in the eyes of the Emperor and my own comrades keep taunting me for being a liar. Certainly, then it occurred to me that I should relate the event of Mi'rāj before him. The Emperor would himself conclude from it that it was a lie. So, I said: I shall describe before you what he claims to have happened to him regarding which you will yourself realize that it was a lie. Hiraql asked: What event is that? Abū Sufyān said: This claimant of prophet-hood says that, one night, he left Makkah al-Mukarramah, reached this Masjid Baytul-maqdis of yours and, then, within that night, before dawn, he returned to us in Makkah al-Mukarramah!

At that time, the leading scholar of Elia' (Baytul-maqdis) was standing close to Hiraql, the Roman Emperor. He disclosed that he knew that night. The Emperor turned to him and inquired as to how did he come to know about it. He submitted that, as a matter of habit, he would not sleep at night until he had closed all gates of Baytul-maqdis. That night he habitually closed all gates but one which would not close despite his effort. He summoned his staff. They all tried but they too failed to close it. The panels of the gate remained simply unmoved from their place. It seemed as if they were trying to move some mountain. Rendered helpless, he called technicians and carpenters. They looked at the gate and decided that the weight of the building has come to rest on the panels of the gate. There was no way it could be closed before morning. When morning comes, they said, they will see how this could be fixed. Nonplussed, he returned leaving both panels of the gate ajar. As soon as it was morning, he came back to the gate where he noticed that someone had made a hole in the rock close to the gate of the Masjid which gave the impression that some animal was tied down there. At that time he had told his colleagues: Perhaps, Allah Ta'ālā has caused this gate not to close today because some prophet was to come here. And then, he also stated that this blessed prophet has also offered his prayer in this Masjid of ours. Thereafter, he has described further details. (Ibn Kathīr, p. 24, v. 3)

The date of the event of al-'Isrā' and Mi'rāj

Imām al-Qurṭubī has said in his Tafsīr that the narratives of Ḥadīth

regarding the date of Mi'rāj are quite different. According to Musa ibn 'Uqbah, this event came to pass six month before the Hijrah to Madīnah. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says that Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Khadījah رضى الله عنها had passed away before the injunction making Ṣalāh a Farḍ (obligation) was revealed. Imām Zuhrī says that the event of the sad demise of Sayyidah Khadījah رضى الله عنها took place seven years after the call to the mission of prophet-hood.

According to some Ḥadīth narratives, the event of Mi'rāj happened five years after the call to prophet-hood. Ibn Isḥāq says that the event of Mi'rāj took place at a time when Islam had spread throughout the tribes of Arabia generally. The outcome of all these narratives is that the event of Mi'rāj dates back to several years before the Hijrah to Madīnah.

Al-Ḥarbi says that the event of al-'Isrā' and Mi'rāj has happened during the night of the 27th of Rabī' ath-Thānī, one year before Hijrah and Ibn al-Qāsim adh-Dhahabi says that it took place eighteen months after the call to prophet-hood. Esteemed Muḥaddithīn (Ḥadīth scholars) who have mentioned these different narratives have not followed it up with any decisive statement. And as commonly known, the 27th night of the month of Rajab is the Night of Mi'rāj. والله سبحانه و تعالى اعلم (And Allah, the Pure and the High, knows best).

Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām and al-Masjid al-Aqṣā

Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī ﷺ says that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'Which Masjid of this world comes first?' He said, 'Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām.' Then he inquired, 'Which one after that?' He said, 'Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā.' Then he tried to find out the intervening time difference between the two whereupon he said, 'Forty years.' After that, he added, '(as for the order of these *masājid*, this is it) but, Allah Ta'ālā has made the entire Earth a *masjid* for us. Wherever comes the time of Ṣalāh, offer it right there.' (Reported by Muslim)

Early Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid says that Allah Ta'ālā has made the site of Baytullah two thousand years before He made the entire Earth and that its foundations reach as far down as the seventh (strata of) Earth and that al-Masjid al-Aqṣā was made by Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام. (Reported by an-Nasā'ī with sound chains of authority from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar) (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, p. 137, v. 4)

And al-Masjid al-Ḥarām is the name of the Mosque that stands around the Baytullah ash-Sharīf while, on occasions, the entire Ḥarām is also identified as al-Masjid al-Ḥarām. In terms of this second sense, the dichotomy of those two reports - some hold that the Holy Prophet ﷺ left for the nocturnal journey, al-'Isrā', from the home of Sayyidah Umm Ḥānī' رضى الله عنها while others say that he departed from the section of Baytullah known as Ḥaṭīm - stands removed. If we were to take al-Masjid al-Ḥarām in its general sense, it is not far out to believe that he may have been there in the home of Sayyidah Umm Ḥānī' رضى الله عنها first, then he walked over to the Ḥaṭīm of Ka'bah and then began the journey of al-'Isrā' from there. Allah knows best.

Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā and blessings of the Syrian environs

The word: حَوْل (*ḥawl*: environs) in the verse: بٰرَكْنَا حَوْلَه (the environs of which We have blessed) means the entire land of Syria. It appears in a Ḥadīth that Allah Ta'ālā has made the land from the 'Arsh (Divine Throne) to the river, Euphrates and, out of this, He has bestowed particular holiness on the land of Palestine. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The blessings it has are both religious and worldly. As for religious blessings, it has been the Qiblah of all past prophets, and their home, and the last resting place. And that its land is green, lush and verdant with streams, rivers and fruit farms etc. shows its worldly blessings.

Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal ﷺ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Allah Ta'ālā says: O land of Syria, thou art My region chosen from many and I shall make My chosen servants reach thee. (Qurṭubī) And it appears in a Ḥadīth of the Musnad of Aḥmad that the Imposter will traverse the whole Earth but he will not be granted access to four Mosques: (1) Masjid of Madīnah, (2) Masjid of Makkah al-Mukarramah, (3) Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā and (4) Masjid Ṭūr.

Verses 2 - 3

وَاٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ وَجَعَلْنٰهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِىْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اَلَّا تَتَّخِذُوْا
مِنْ دُوْنِىْ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٢﴾ ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوْحٍ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ عَبْدًا
شَكُوْرًا ﴿٣﴾

And We gave Mūsā the Book and made it guidance for the children of Isrā'īl (with the command) "Do not take anyone other than Me as guardian, [2] **O descendants of those whom We put on board with Nūḥ. Surely, He was a very grateful servant."** [3]

Verses 4 - 8

وَقَضَيْنَآ اِلٰى بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ فِى الْكِتٰبِ لَتُفْسِدُنَّ فِى الْاَرْضِ مَرَّتَيْنِ
وَلَتَعْلُنَّ عُلُوًّا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٤﴾ فَاِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ اُوْلٰىهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَآ
اُولِيْ بَاْسٍ شَدِيْدٍ فَجَاسُوْا خِلٰلَ الدِّيَارِ ۭ وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُوْلًا ﴿٥﴾ ثُمَّ
رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاَمْدَدْنٰكُمْ بِاَمْوَالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ وَجَعَلْنٰكُمْ اَكْثَرَ
نَفِيْرًا ﴿٦﴾ اِنْ اَحْسَنْتُمْ اَحْسَنْتُمْ لِاَنْفُسِكُمْ ۣ وَاِنْ اَسَاْتُمْ فَلَهَا ۭ فَاِذَا
جَآءَ وَعْدُ الْاٰخِرَةِ لِيَسُوْۗءٗا وُجُوْهَكُمْ وَلِيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا
دَخَلُوْهُ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّلِيُتَبِّرُوْا مَا عَلَوْا تَتْبِيْرًا ﴿٧﴾ عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ
يَّرْحَمَكُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ عُدْتُّمْ عُدْنَا ۘ وَجَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ حَصِيْرًا ﴿٨﴾

And, in the Book, We declared to the children of Isrā'īl: "You will surely spread disorder on the earth twice, and you will surely show arrogance, a great arrogance. [4]

So, when came the time appointed for the first of the two, We sent upon you some servants belonging to us having strong aggressive power, who combed through the houses. And it was a promise bound to be fulfilled. [5] **Then We gave you your turn to overpower them, and increased your strength with wealth and sons, and made you greater in number.** [6] **If you do good, you will do it for yourselves, and if you do evil, it will be for you, too. Later, when came the time appointed for the second, (We sent others) so that they spoil your faces, and so that they enter into the Mosque as the former ones had entered it the first time and destroy what they overpower, totally.** [7]

May be your Lord would bestow mercy upon you. And if you do this again, We shall do that again. And We have made Jahannam a prison for the disbelievers. [8]

Sequence of Verses

Verses 2 and 3 featuring the statement: جَعَلْنٰهُ هُدًى لِّبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ (We made it guidance for the children of Banī Isrā'īl) exhorted the Banī Isrā'īl to follow and obey the Divine Law. The verses that follow warn and admonish them on their disobedience. These verses mention two events relating to the Banī Isrā'īl so that they serve as a lesson. Tuned to sin and disobedience, first they increased the tempo of their hostility. Allah Ta'ālā set their enemies upon them. They shook them up. The Jews got the message, cut down on their mischief and gave the impression of having been corrected. But, soon after, the same lust for mischief and misdeeds overtook them. So then, Allah Ta'ālā had them punished at the hands of their enemies. The Qur'ān mentions two events while history carries six like these:

1. The first event came to pass some time after the demise of Sayyidnā Sulaymān عليه السلام, the founder of Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā, when the ruler of Baytul-maqdis became irreligious and corrupt. The ruler of Egypt attacked him and took away the gold and silver of Baytul-maqdis. But, he did not demolish the city and the Masjid.

2. The second event relates to the period nearly four hundred years after that. Some Jews settled in Baytul-maqdis started idol-worship while the rest began disputing among themselves. This ill omen prompted another ruler of Egypt to attack them which somewhat affected the city and the Masjid both. After that, their condition took a turn for the better.

3. The third event came to pass after some years when Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon ransacked Baytul-maqdis. He conquered the city, looted property and took back a lot of people as prisoners of war. When he left, he had a member of the family of the former king appointed a ruler of the city as his deputy.

4. When this new king, who worshipped idols and was corrupt, rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, he returned, killed people, destroyed property en masse and burned the city razing it to rubbles. This happened nearly four hundred and fifteen years after the construction of the Masjid. After that, the Jews went out as exiles to Babylon where they lived in disgrace for seventy years. After that, the King of Iran attacked

the King of Babylon and conquered it. Then the King of Iran showed mercy to the Jewish expatriates and ordered that they should be sent back to Syria along with things looted from them. Now the Jews had repented having forsaken their habitual sins and misdeeds. When they resettled there, they restored the original structure of Al-Masjid al-Aqṣā with the support of the King of Irān.

5. Then came the fifth event. When the Jews had peace and prosperity once again, the first thing they forgot was their past. They returned to the kind of evil deeds they were used to. Then, it so happened that, one hundred and seventy years before the birth of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام, the king who had founded Antakiah (Antioch) attacked, killed forty thousand Jews and took with him another forty thousand as prisoners and slaves, even desecrated the Masjid though its structure remained safe. But, later, the successors of that king rendered the city and the Masjid totally denuded. Soon after this, Baytul-maqdis came under the authority of Roman kings. They put the Masjid back into shape and it was after eight years that Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام was born.

6. Forty years after the physical ascension of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام, the Jews chose to rebel against their Roman rulers. The Romans destroyed the city and the Masjid once again relegating it to what it was. The king at that time was called Titus who was neither Jewish nor Christian because long after him Constantine I was a Christian. From that time to the time of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه, this Masjid lay desolate until he had it reconstructed. These six events have been reported in Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān with reference to Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī.

Now, it is difficult to precisely determine as to which two out of those mentioned above are the two events mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān. But, as obvious, the events that are major and serious among these, in which the Jews were far too wicked and more seriously punished too, should be taken as the likely ones. The fourth and the sixth event seem to be fit for such application. At this point, a lengthy Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Hudhayfah رضي الله عنه, with its chains of authority ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, has been reported in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī. It also helps in determining that these two events mean the fourth and the sixth event. The translation of this lengthy Ḥadīth is given below:

Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ﷺ says that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ if Baytul-maqdis was a great Masjid in the sight of Allah. He said that it was the most distinct house of Worship in the world, the greatest of all houses, which Allah Ta'ālā made for Sulaymān, the son of Dāwūd, peace be on both, with gold, silver and precious stones like ruby and emerald. The manner in which this happened was, when Sulaymān عليه السلام started its construction, Allah Ta'ālā made the Jinn subservient to him. The Jinn collected this gold, silver and precious stones and used them in the making of the Masjid. Sayyidnā Hudhayfah ﷺ says that he, then, asked as to where and how did all that gold, silver and precious stones go out of Baytul-maqdis? The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: When the Banī Isrā'īl disobeyed Allah Ta'ālā, got involved in sins and misdeeds and killed their noble prophets, Allah Ta'ālā set King Nebuchadnezzar on them. He was a fire-worshipper who ruled Baytul-maqdis for seven hundred years. And when the Qur'ān says: فَإِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ أُولٰىهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَآ أُولِى بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ (So, when came the time appointed for the first of the two, We sent upon you some servants belonging to Us having strong aggressive power - 17:5), it means this event. The army of Nebuchadnezzar entered the Masjid of al-Quds, killed men, took women and children prisoners and carried away with him all gold, silver and everything of value belonging to Baytul-maqdis loaded on one hundred and seventy thousand vehicles. He kept the treasure in his country, Babylon and kept the children of Isrā'īl as his serfs and slaves for a hundred years making them do hard labor in utter disgrace.

Then Allah Ta'ālā made a king from among the kings of Persia to stand up against him. He conquered Babylon, freed the remnants of Banī Isrā'īl from the bondage of Nebuchadnezzar and made arrangements to have all valuables he had brought from Baytul-maqdis returned back to it. Then he sternly told the Banī Isrā'īl that should they, in future, return to disobedience and sin, he too will return the punishment of killing and prison back on them. This is what the verse of the Qur'ān: عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يَّرْحَمَكُمْ وَاِنْ عُدْتُّمْ عُدْنَا (May be your Lord would bestow mercy upon you. And if you do this again, We shall do that again - 17:8) means.

Later, when the Banī Isrā'īl had come back to Baytul-maqdis (with lost wealth and property in their possession), they went back to the life

of sins and misdeeds. At that time, Allah Ta'ālā set the Roman Emperor, Caesar upon them. This is what the verse: فَإِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ الْاٰخِرَةِ لِيَسُوْٓءُ وُجُوْهَكُمْ (Later, when came the time appointed for the second, [We sent others] so that they spoil your faces - 17:7) means. The Roman Emperor launched a two-pronged attack, from the land and the sea. He killed many and many were those he took prisoners. Then he had all this wealth of Baytul-maqdis loaded on one hundred and seventy thousand vehicles and took it home. There he had it deposited in the Temple of Gold. This wealth is still there, and there it will remain until comes the Mahdī who would bring these back to Baytul-maqdis on one hundred and seventy thousand boats and it will be at this place that Allah Ta'ālā will assemble everyone, former and later. (Lengthy Ḥadīth as reported by al-Qurṭubī in his Tafsīr)

It appears in Bayān al-Qur'ān, that the two events mentioned in the Qur'ān refer to the disobedience of two Divine Codes of Law, first the disobedience to the Code brought by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and, then, after the advent of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام, the disobedience to the Code brought by him. Thus, all events described above can be considered as relevant to the first disobedience. Now that we have gone through the details of the events, we can turn to the explanation of the verses cited above.

Commentary

The outcome of the events mentioned above is that Allah Ta'ālā had decreed that the Banī Isrā'īl will be successful, having the best of both worlds, the material and the spiritual, as long as they continue to obey Allah. But, whenever they deviate from the dictates of Faith, they shall be put to disgrace, and that they would be subjected to punishment at the hands of enemies and disbelievers. Then, not only that the enemies will run over them destroying their lives and properties, but it would also happen that their Qiblah, their sacred Baytul-maqdis, will also not remain safe against the onslaught of that enemy. Their disbelieving enemies will barge into the Mosque of Baytul-maqdis and defile and damage it. This too will be a part of the punishment of Banī Isrā'īl themselves. The Holy Qur'ān has told us about two events relating to them. The first one dates back to the time of Mosaic religious law while the second pertains to the Christian. During both these periods, the Banī Isrā'īl rebelled against the divine law of the time. In the first case, a disbelieving Magian monarch was made to sit over them, and

Baytul-maqdis, who brought great destruction upon them. In the second case, a Roman emperor was set against them who killed and pillaged and made Baytul-maqdis all demolished and rendered desolate. And along with this description, it has also been mentioned that the Banī Isrā'īl - when, on both occasions, they repented from their misdeeds resolving not to go near them again - Allah Ta'ālā reinstated their country, wealth and children.

After having mentioned these two events, Allah Ta'ālā declared His Law in such matters by saying: وَإِنْ عُدْتُّمْ عُدْنَا (If you do this again, We shall do that again - 8). This law which means - 'if you return to disobedience and contumacy, We shall, once again, make a similar penalty and punishment zoom back upon you' - has been declared as valid right through the last day of Qiyamah. That its addressees were the people of Banī Isrā'īl who were present during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ serves as a reminder to them. It is being pointed out to them that they should not forget that they were seized by divine punishment twice when they had first opposed the code of Sayyidnā Mūsā, and then the code of Sayyidnā 'Isā. Now this was the period of the Code of laws brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was a period that will continue up to the Last Day. Let them, therefore, realize that the fate of those who chose to be hostile to it will turn out to be no different. Consequently, this was actually happened. These people became hostile to Islam and the religious code of laws brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When they did that, they were expelled and disgraced at the hands of Muslims, and finally Baytul-maqdis, their Qiblah, too came under Muslim control. However, the only difference was that their past conquering kings had treated them disgracefully and had desecrated their Qiblah too. Now when Muslims took over Baytul-maqdis, they reconstructed the great Mosque of al-Quds ash-Sharīf which was lying demolished and desolate for centuries and thereby reinstated the honor and reverence of the Qiblah of prophets.

The events of Banī Isrā'īl are a lesson for Muslims and what has happened to Baytul-maqdis in our time is a part of the same chain

Obviously, the purpose of narrating these events relating to the Banī Isrā'īl in the Qur'ān and making Muslims listen to them is to let Mus-

lims understand that they are no exceptions to this divine law. Be it this mortal world or the eternal universe of their Faith, their honor and ascendancy, possessions and wealth are inseparably tied with obedience to Allah. Whenever they veer away from their obedience to Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, their enemies and disbelieving tyrants of all sorts shall be empowered to prevail over them. When this happens, the desecration of their places of worship will also not remain too far.

The calamity of the Jewish usurpation of Baytul-maqdis in our time and the added sacrilege of setting fire to it has thrown the world of Islam into acute anxiety. In reality, it is confirming the Qur'ān. Muslims forgot Allah and His Rasūl, ignored the life waiting for them in the Hereafter and opted to scrounge for their share in the glamour and grandeur of the mortal world. When they became aliens to the dictates of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, the same divine law stood activated before them. A few hundred thousand Jews overcame them. They also inflicted the loss of life and property on them. Worse still is the fate of one of the three greatest mosques of the world according to the religious law of Islam, a mosque that has the distinction of being the Qiblah of all prophets. It was snatched from them and those who took it over had a track record of being the most disgraced people in this world, that is, the Jews. In addition to that, it is common observation that these people stand nowhere close to Muslims in terms of their numbers, nor do they have some significant superiority over the current collective Muslim holdings of war materials. This also tells us that this event does not really give Jews any niche of honor in the annals of world nations. However, it does provide punishment for Muslims in return for their disobedience. It clearly shows that everything that came to pass came as the punishment of our own misdeeds. And it also shows that there is no remedy for it except that we should feel ashamed of our misdeeds, make a genuine *taubah* (repentance), start obeying the commandments of Allah, become true Muslims and shun the great sins of imitating and trusting others. If we were to do just that, *insha'Allah,* true to the Divine promise, Baytul-maqdis and Palestine shall return to us. But, it is regrettable that the present-day Arab rulers and common Muslims living in Arab lands have yet to be alerted to that reality. They are still relying on foreign assistance while making plans of taking Baytul-maqdis back, something that does

not appear to be probable, at least outwardly. Where else shall we lodge our plaint but Allah!

The only weapon system and military hardware with which Baytul-maqdis and Palestine can return to Muslim hands are still there waiting to be picked up - Return to Allah, genuinely and passionately. Have certitude of Akhirah. Obey the injunctions of the Sharī'ah. Stay away from imitating and trusting others in our social and political goals. Finally, let us place our trust in Allah and wage a purely Islamic Jihād as enjoined by the Sharī'ah. May Allah Ta'ālā give our Arab rulers and other Muslims the ability to answer the challenge effectively.

A strange coincidence

Allah Ta'ālā has made two places on this Earth to serve as the Qiblah or orientation for those who worship Him, the Baytul-maqdis and the Baytullah. But, the divine law relating to each of them is different. That Baytullah shall be protected and that disbelievers shall never take it over is a security concern that Allah Ta'ālā has taken it upon Himself. The Event of the Elephant mentioned in Sūrah al-Fīl (105) of the Holy Qur'ān came as its result. When the Christian king of Yaman (Abrahah al-Ashram) invaded Baytullah, Allah Ta'ālā destroyed him and his army along with the contingent of elephants he had brought, through birds, much before he could reach Baytullah.

But, this law does not apply in the case of Baytul-maqdis. Instead, as the verses cited above tell us, when Muslims go astray and start indulging in disobedience and sin, this Qiblah will be snatched away from them and it will pass into the control of disbelievers.

Disbelievers too are the servants of Allah, but not among the accepted ones

About the first event (5), the Holy Qur'ān said: When the people of Faith start letting them be seduced to discord, sin, disobedience and disorder, Allah Ta'ālā shall set upon them such servants of His as would break into their homes killing and plundering. At this place, the Qur'ān has used the expression: عِبَادًا لَّنَا (*'ibādal-lanā:* Some servants belonging tu Us) and not: عِبَادَنَا (*'ibādanā:* Our servants) - even though it was brief. There is wisdom behind it. Is it not that the attribution of a servant to Allah is, for him, the greatest conceivable honor? This is similar to what

we have explained at the beginning of this very Sūrah under our comments on the first verse: أَسْرٰى بِعَبْدِهٖ (*asrā' bi'abdihī*: made His servant travel at night). There it was said that certainly great was the honor and nearness the Holy Prophet ﷺ was blessed with during the night of the Mi'rāj. But, when the Qur'ān describes this event, it does not mention either his blessed name or some attribute. It simply said: عَبْدِهٖ (*'abdihī*: His servant). This tells us that the ultimate perfection a human person can have, and the highest station he can occupy, is that Allah Ta'ālā chooses to cherish a servant by calling him 'His' servant. In the verse under reference, the people who meted out the punishment to the Banī Isrā'īl were *kāfirs*, or disbelievers after all. Therefore, instead of calling them: عِبَادَنَا (Our servants), Allah Ta'ālā has broken the element of attribution and connection and said: عِبَادًا لَّنَا (some servants belonging to Us). Thus, a hint has been given here that all human beings are nothing but servants of Allah as created, but because of the absence of 'Īmān or faith, they are not the kind of accepted servants who could be attributed directly to Allah Ta'ālā.

Verses 9 - 11

إِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ أَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٩﴾ وَّأَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيْمًا ﴿١٠﴾ وَيَدْعُ الْإِنْسَانُ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَآءَهٗ بِالْخَيْرِ ۖ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ عَجُوْلًا ﴿١١﴾

Surely, this Qur'ān guides to the way which is most upright and gives the believers who do good deeds the glad tidings that there is a great reward for them, [9] **and that for those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have prepared a painful punishment.** [10]

Man invites evil as he would invite good, and man is prone to haste. [11]

Sequence

At the beginning of the Sūrah, the majesty of the prophet-hood of the Messenger of Allah was described through the miracle of al-Mi'rāj. The present verses cite the miracle of Qur'ān as its confirmation.

Commentary

The most upright way

The way to which the Qur'ān guides has been called *'aqwam,'* the most upright. 'Aqwam' can be explained by saying that it is a way that is closer to the destination, is easy and free of dangers at the same time. (Qurṭubī) This tells us that the rules set for human life by the Holy Qur'ān are a combination of all three features mentioned above. However, it is a different matter that man may start taking this way to be difficult or dangerous on occasions because of his own lack of comprehension. But, the Lord of all the worlds has the most comprehensive knowledge of every single particle in the entire universe. Before Him, the past and the future are the same. It is He who can have the knowledge of the reality as to the function and form most beneficial for human beings. And since man is unaware of things as they are in a comprehensive setting, he cannot identify even his own good or bad fully and decisively.

Perhaps, it is based on this congruity that it was said in verse 11 that man would, on occasions, pray for something in a haste, something that spells out destruction for him. If Allah Ta'ālā were to answer such a prayer, he would be ruined. But, Allah Ta'ālā does not answer such prayers instantly until man himself comes to realize that his prayer was made in error and that it was fatal for him. Then, in the last sentence of this very verse, a natural weakness of man has been mentioned in the form of a standing rule - that man is, by nature, haste-prone. He keeps his sight trained on passing profit and loss and falls short on foresight and hindsight. He loves to go for the immediate gain and comfort, even if it happens to be only a little. He would not bat an eye to prefer it to the greater and more lasting gain and comfort. In short, this verse points out to a natural weakness of human beings in general.

And some authorities in Tafsīr have taken this verse to be related to a particular event. The event they refer to concerns Naḍr ibn Ḥārith who had made a prayer in the heat of his hostility to Islam saying:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنْ كَانَ هٰذَا هُوَ الْحَقَّ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ فَاَمْطِرْ عَلَيْنَا حِجَارَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ اَوِائْتِنَا بِعَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ

O Allah, if this [Islam] is the truth from You, then, rain down on us rocks from the skies or send upon us some other painful

punishment.

In that case, *'al-insān'* of the text would be referring to those mentioned above, or those like them.

Verses 12 - 15

وَجَعَلْنَا الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ اٰيَتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَآ اٰيَةَ الَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَآ اٰيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً
لِّتَبْتَغُوْا فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوْا عَدَدَ السِّنِيْنَ وَالْحِسَابَ ؕ وَكُلَّ
شَیْءٍ فَصَّلْنٰهُ تَفْصِيْلًا ﴿۱۲﴾ وَكُلَّ اِنْسَانٍ اَلْزَمْنٰهُ طٰٓئِرَهٗ فِیْ عُنُقِهٖ ؕ
وَنُخْرِجُ لَهٗ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ كِتٰبًا يَّلْقٰهُ مَنْشُوْرًا ﴿۱۳﴾ اِقْرَاْ كِتٰبَكَ ؕ كَفٰى
بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيْبًا ﴿۱۴﴾ مَنِ اهْتَدٰى فَاِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِیْ لِنَفْسِهٖ ۚ
وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَاِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ؕ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى ؕ وَمَا كُنَّا
مُعَذِّبِيْنَ حَتّٰى نَبْعَثَ رَسُوْلًا ﴿۱۵﴾

And We have made the night and the day two signs having made the sign of night dark and the sign of day bright, so that you may seek grace from your Lord, and that you may know the number of the years and computation. And everything We have expounded in detail. [12]

And every human's (deeds determining his) fate We have tied up to his neck, and We shall bring forth for him, on the day of Resurrection, a book he will receive wide open. [13] **"Read your book. This day you yourself are enough to take your own account."** [14]

Whoever takes to right path does so for his own good, and whoever goes astray does so to his own detriment. And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another. And it is not Our way to punish (anyone) unless We send a Messenger. [15]

Commentary

In the verses cited above, first it was declared that the alternation of night and day was a sign of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. Then it was said that there was great wisdom in the making of the night dark and the day, bright. As for the wise consideration behind the making of

the night dark, it was not mentioned at this place. It has, however, been mentioned in other verses that the darkness of the night is appropriate and conducive to sleep and rest. The divine arrangement is such that humans and animals go to sleep in the darkness of that very night. In fact, the whole world sleeps simultaneously in harmony with its night. Had different people been scheduled to sleep at different timings, the noises made by those awake and those working at jobs would have turned the sleep of the sleeping into a nightmare.

As for the day being bright, it has two elements of wisdom. Firstly, one can earn his living in the light of the day and natural light is needed for jobs, businesses and industries. Secondly, the alternation of night and day helps one know the number of years, for instance, the completion of three hundred and sixty days tells us that a full year has gone by.

Similarly, other calculations are also related to the alternation of night and day. If this variation of night and day were not there, it would have been difficult to fix the wages of the wage earner, the employment of the employee and the time duration of transactions.

The sense of the book of deeds tied to the neck

It means that one's book of deed stays with the doer no matter where or in whatever condition one is. What he or she does continues to get recorded there. When death comes, the 'book' is closed and set aside safely. After that, when comes the Last Day, the Day of Judgement, this book of deeds will be placed in everyone's hand in order that he would himself read it and also decide himself whether he is deserving of reward or deserving of punishment. It has been reported from Qatādah رحمه الله تعالى that it will be a day when even an illiterate person will be able to read his book of deeds. On this occasion, al-Iṣbahānī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Umamah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: On the day of Qiyāmah, when the book of deeds belonging to people will be given in their hand, someone will notice that some of his good deeds were not recorded there. He will tell his Lord about the particular deeds missing from there. His Lord will tell him that He had erased those deeds for he used to speak ill of people on their backs. (Maẓharī)

Allah does not punish unless He sends a Messenger: A clarification

On the basis of this verse, some leading Muslim jurists rule that peo-

ple to whom the call of any prophet or messenger did not reach will not be subject to any punishment, despite their disbelief. There are other leading jurists who hold that those who deny the Islamic beliefs that can be understood through reason - such as, the existence of God and His Oneness etc. - will be punished for their disbelief, even if no call from any prophet or messenger has reached them. Of course, there will be no punishment for usual acts of disobedience and sins without prior call and transmission of the divine message by prophets. And there are still others who interpret '*rasūl*' at this place (15) in a general sense, whether he is a messenger or prophet, or whether it is the human reason itself - for, that too, in a way, is a messenger of Allah after all.

There will be no punishment for the children of Mushriks

Commenting on the verse: لَاتَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ (And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another - 15), it has been said in Tafsīr Mazharī that this verse proves that the children of Mushriks and disbelievers who die before reaching adulthood will not be punished. The reason is that they will not deserve to be punished on account of the denial and disbelief of their parents. Sayings of leading jurists differ about this issue; its details are unnecessary here.

Verses 16 - 17

وَإِذَآ أَرَدْنَآ أَنْ نُّهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا فِيهَا فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا الْقَوْلُ فَدَمَّرْنٰهَا تَدْمِيرًا ﴿١٦﴾ وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِنْ بَعْدِ نُوحٍ ۗ وَكَفٰى بِرَبِّكَ بِذُنُوبِ عِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿١٧﴾

And when We intend to destroy a habitation, We command its affluent people (to do good), then they commit sins therein, and thus the word (of punishment) becomes due against it (habitation) and We annihilate it totally. [16]

And how many a generation We have destroyed after Nūḥ! And enough is your Lord to know, (and) watch the sins of His servants. [17]

Sequence

Previous verses said that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that he does not send punishment upon a people until the command-

ments of Allah reach them through the blessed prophets which they still refuse to obey. Given in the verses cited above is what happens on the other side when the messages of Allah and His Messenger do reach a people and they still show contumacy, then, a mass punishment is sent over them.

Commentary

A doubt and its answer

A surface look at the expressions: إِذَآ أَرَدْنَا (*idhā aradnā*: when We intend) and, after that: أَمَرْنَا (*amarnā*: We command) in verse 12 could have triggered the doubt that destroying those people was the divine purpose from the very beginning. Therefore, they were first commanded to believe and obey through the prophets, then their indulgence in sin was made to be the cause of punishment. All this came from none but Allah Ta'ālā. Is it not? If so, would these innocent people not be just about a helpless and excusable lot? The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā has given man reason and choice and has determined the ways of reward and punishment. Now, if someone elects to do nothing but what brings punishment, then, it is the customary practice of Allah that He would activate the causes that bring the same punishment. Thus, the real cause of punishment they receive is nothing but their own resolve and determination to remain on the side of disbelief and sin. Since this is no simple intention, therefore, they cannot be helpless and excusable.

Another Tafsīr of this verse

The well known sense of the word: أَمَرْنَا (*amarnā*) is the same as appears above, that is, 'We commanded.' But, the renditions or versions (*qirā'āt*) of this word differ. In one rendition opted for by Abū 'Uthmān an-Nahdi, Abū Raja', Abū al-'Āliyah and Mujāhid, this word has appeared with a double sound on the letter *mīm*. Rendered as: أَمَّرْنَا (*ammarnā*), it means 'We made affluent people leaders and rulers, who then sank in sin, and thus became the cause of punishment for the whole people.'

There is a *qirā'ah* (rendition or version) of this word credited to Sayyidnā 'Alī and Ibn 'Abbās ؓ where it has been recited as: آمَرْنَا (*aamarnā*) and which has also been explained by them as having the sense of: أَكْثَرْنَا (*aktharnā*: We increase the number of). Thus it comes to mean: 'When

Allah Ta'ālā sends punishment on a certain people, its initial sign is that the number of the reckless rich is increased among them and they, through their spate of sins, become the cause of making the punishment descend upon the entire people.'

The outcome of the first *qirā'ah* is that such affluent people are made the rulers of a people. The outcome of the second *qirā'ah* is that the number of such people is increased in that society. Both versions show that the government of the 'affluent' or the abundance of such people in a society is not something to be happy about, rather, is a sign of divine punishment.

Let us recapitulate. When Allah Ta'ālā is angry with a people and intends to make a punishment descend upon them, there appears an initial sign of it. People who love to wallow in wealth and power are made the ruling custodians of their affairs, or, even if they do not become their actual political rulers, the number of such people is increased among a people. In both these cases, the result is the same. Drunk with the pleasures they can buy, acquire or appropriate with their affluence and influence, they start caring less for anything else, disobey the will and command of Allah personally as well as lead the trail for others to follow in their footsteps. In consequence, comes the punishment of Allah Ta'ālā all over them.

The influence of the rich over a people is a natural phenomenon

By particularly mentioning affluent people who use their wealth to pursue a life of luxury, it has been indicated that the masses are naturally affected with the deeds and morals of those rich among them and those who rule over them. When these people get used to misdeeds, the whole nation follows suit and takes to misdeeds (as the only available norm of social survival). Therefore, those who have been blessed with wealth by Allah Ta'ālā should be more concerned with the correction of their deeds and morals - lest they fall into the trap of a luxurious life style, are heedless to self-correction, and make the entire nation go astray because of them. If so, the curse of the misdeeds that issue forth from their nation will fall on them too.

Verses 18 - 21

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهٗ فِيْهَا مَا نَشَآءُ لِمَنْ نُّرِيْدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهٗ
جَهَنَّمَ ۚ يَصْلٰهَا مَذْمُوْمًا مَّدْحُوْرًا ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَنْ اَرَادَ الْاٰخِرَةَ وَسَعٰى لَهَا
سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَّشْكُوْرًا ﴿١٩﴾ كُلًّا نُّمِدُّ
هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ مِنْ عَطَآءِ رَبِّكَ ؕ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَآءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُوْرًا
﴿٢٠﴾ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ ؕ وَلَلْاٰخِرَةُ اَكْبَرُ دَرَجٰتٍ
وَّاَكْبَرُ تَفْضِيْلًا ﴿٢١﴾

Whoever opts for the immediate (benefits from) life herein, We give him right here, in this life, as much as We will to whomever We intend. Then We assign Jahannam for him where he shall enter condemned, discarded. [18] **And whoever opts for the Hereafter and makes efforts for it as due, while he is a believer, then, the effort of such people is appreciated!** [19]

To all of them - both these and those - We extend the blessings of your Lord. And the blessing of your Lord is not barred (to anyone). [20]

See how We made some of them excel some others (in this world) and, of course, the Hereafter is far higher in ranks and far greater in degrees of merit. [21]

Commentary

Two behavior models of human beings appear in the cited verses side by side. As for those who elect to go for the readily available benefits out of their life in this world, and the punishment that comes in its wake, the words used were: مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيْدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ (Whoever opts for the immediate life herein - 18). These words signify continuity and permanence meaning that this punishment of Hell will materialize only when one's actions are all the time motivated by material interests only, having practically no concern for the Hereafter. And as for 'those who desire to have the Hereafter and its rewards,' the words used were: اَرَادَ الْاٰخِرَةَ The sense is that as soon as a true believer were to form an intention to have the reward of the Hereafter in whatever he proposes to do, that deed of his shall stand accepted - irrespective of any corruptive element having entered into something else he was intending to do.

The first condition can only be that of a denier of the Hereafter, therefore, none of his deeds is acceptable. Then, the second condition is that of a true believer. A particular deed by him that issues forth with sincerity of intention, and is for the Hereafter - along with the presence of other conditions - shall be acceptable. And a deed even from the same person, a deed that has no sincerity, or where other conditions are missing, will not be acceptable.

A self-opinionated deed and an act of religious innovation, no matter how appealing, is not acceptable

In this verse (19), by adding the word: سَعْيَهَا (as due), it has been made explicit that every deed and every effort is not necessarily beneficial or acceptable with Allah. Instead, the only deed or effort credible is that which is appropriate to the essential objective (of the Hereafter). And whether or not it is appropriate can only be found out from the statement of Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger ﷺ. Therefore, even well meaning efforts made by insisting on bland personal opinion and self-invented ways - which includes common customs of Bid'ah (innovations in established religion) - no matter how good and beneficial they may appear at their face, but are not appropriate to the effort made for the Hereafter. Consequently, they are neither acceptable with Allah nor are they of any use in the Hereafter.

Explaining the word: سَعْيَهَا (as due), Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī says that the 'effort' should be in accordance with *'sunnah.'* Along with it, it adds that this effort or deed should also have uprightness and firmness. In other words, this deed should be beneficial in accordance with the Sunnah as well as it should be upright and constant. Doing it haphazardly or doing it in a cycle of doing and not doing is not good. It never yields the maximum benefit.

Verses 22 - 25

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُوْمًا مَّخْذُوْلًا ﴿۲۲﴾ وَقَضٰى
رَبُّكَ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا ۭ اِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ
اَحَدُهُمَآ اَوْ كِلٰهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَّهُمَآ اُفٍّ وَّلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَّهُمَا قَوْلًا

كَرِيمًا ﴿٢٣﴾ وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُل رَّبِّ
ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا ﴿٢٤﴾ رَّبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ ۚ إِن
تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلْأَوَّابِينَ غَفُورًا ﴿٢٥﴾

Do not set up any other god along with Allah, or you will sit condemned, forsaken. [22]

And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him and do good to parents. If either of them or both reach old age, do not say to them '*uff*' (a word of anger or contempt) and do not scold them. And address them with respectful words, [23] **and submit yourself before them in humility out of compassion and say, "My Lord, be merciful to them as they have brought me up in my childhood."** [24]

Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts. If you are righteous, then He is Most-Forgiving for those who turn to Him in repentance. [25]

Sequence

Previous verses mentioned some conditions attached to the acceptance of deeds. One of the conditions required that no deed is accepted unless it comes with 'Īmān (faith, belief) and is in accordance with Sharī'ah (Law) and Sunnah (sayings and deeds of the Prophet ﷺ). In the present verses, instructions regarding some of such deeds have been given. These are rules set by the Sharī'ah of Islam. Their compliance brings success in the Hereafter and their contravention, ruin. And since the most important of these conditions is that of 'Īmān, therefore, the very first injunction given here was that of belief in the Oneness of Allah (*tauḥīd*). After that come injunctions relating to the rights of the servants of Allah (*ḥuqūq al-'ibād).*

Commentary

It is very important to respect and obey parents

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that, in this verse (23), Allah Ta'ālā has made it necessary (*wājib*) to respect and treat parents well by combining it with the command to worship Him. This is similar to what has been said in Sūrah Luqmān where the inevitable need to thank Him has been combined with the need to thank one's parents: أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ (Be grateful

to Me, and to your parents - 31:14). This proves that, after the obligation of worshipping the most exalted Allah, obeying parents is most important and being grateful to parents like being grateful to Allah Ta'ālā is *wājib* (necessary). This has its confirmation in the Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī where a person reportedly asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "Which is the most favored deed in the sight of Allah?" He said, "Ṣalāh at its (*mustaḥabb:* preferred) time." The person asked again, "Which is the most favored deed after that?" To that he said, "Treating parents well." (Qurṭubī)

The merits of obeying and serving parents in Ḥadīth narratives

1. In the Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah and Mustadrak Ḥākim, it has been reported on sound authority from Sayyidnā Abū 'd-Dardā' ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "A father is the main gate of Jannah. Now it is up to you to preserve or waste it." (Maẓharī)

2. According to a report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ appearing in Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī and al-Mustadrak of al-Ḥākim (which Ḥākim rates as Ṣaḥīḥ), the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The pleasure of Allah is in the pleasure of a father and the displeasure of Allah in the displeasure of a father."

3. Ibn Mājah reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah ؓ that a person asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "What rights do parents have on their children?" He said, "They both are your Paradise, or Hell." It means that obeying and serving parents take one to Jannah and their disobedience and displeasure, to Jahannam.

4. Al-Baihaqī (in Shu'ab al-'Īmān) and Ibn 'Asākir have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "For one who remained obedient to his parents for the sake of Allah two gates of Paradise shall remain open. And for one who disobeyed them two gates of Hell shall remain open, and if he had just one of the two, either father or mother, then, one gate (of Paradise or Hell shall remain open)." Thereupon, someone asked, "Does it (the warning of Hell) hold good even when the parents have been unjust to this person?" Then he said thrice: وَإِنْ ظَلَمَا وَإِنْ ظَلَمَا وَإِنْ ظَلَمَا which means, 'yes, there is that warning of Hell against disobeying and hurting parents even if they were unjust to the son.' (The outcome is that children have no right to settle scores

with parents. If they have been unjust, it does not follow that they too back out from obeying and serving them).

5. Al-Baihaqī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "An obedient son who looks at his parents with mercy and affection receives the reward of one accepted Ḥajj against every such look cast." People around said, "What if he were to look at them like that a hundred times during the day?" He said, "Yes, a hundred times too (he will keep receiving that reward). Allah is great (His treasures never run short)."

The punishment for depriving parents of their rights comes - much before Ākhirah - right here in this world too

6. In Shu'ab al-'Īmān, al-Baihaqī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Bakrah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "As for all those other sins, Allah Ta'ālā defers whichever He wills up to the Last Day of Qiyāmah - except the sin of depriving parents of their rights and disobeying them. The punishment for that is given, much before comes the Hereafter, right here in this world as well. (All Ḥadīth reports given here have been taken from Tafsīr Maẓharī)

Obedience to parents: When necessary and when there is room for opposition

Muslim scholars and jurists unanimously hold that the obedience to parents is *wājib* (necessary) only in what is permissible - and definitely not in what is impermissible or sinful. Says the Ḥadīth:

لا طاعة لمخلوق فى معصية الخالق

There is no obedience to the created in the disobedience of the Creator.

To deserve service and good treatment it is not necessary that the parents be Muslims

To support this ruling, Imām al-Qurṭubī has quoted an event related with Sayyidah Asmā' رضى الله عنها from the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. According to this report, Sayyidah Asmā' asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "My mother, a Mushrik, comes to see me. Is it permissible for me to entertain her?" He said, "صِلِى أُمَّكِ" (*ṣilī ummakī*: that is, respect the bond of relationship with your mother and entertain her). And as for disbelieving parents, there is that statement of the Qur'ān itself (Luqmān, 31:15): صَاحِبْهُمَا فِى الدُّنْيَا

مَعْرُوْفًا (that is, if the parents of a person are *kāfirs* and order him too to become like them, then, it is not permissible to obey them in this matter. But, while living in this world, they should be treated in the recognized manner). It is obvious that 'recognized manner' means that they should be treated with courtesy.

Rulings

1. As long as Jihād does not become an absolute individual obligation (Farḍ al-'Ain), rather remains within the degree of a collective obligation (Farḍ al-Kifāyah), until then, it is not permissible for any son to participate in Jihād without the consent of parents. It has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﷺ that a person presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ in order to have his permission to participate in Jihād. He asked him, "Are your parents alive?" He submitted, "Yes, they are." He said, "ففيهما فجاهد" (*fafīhimā fajāhid*: Then you carry out Jihād in [the service of] them both). The sense is that 'by serving them alone you will get the reward of being in Jihād.' Another report also adds that the person said, "I have come here leaving my parents crying behind." Thereupon, he said, "Go. Make them laugh as you made them cry." In other words, he was to go back home and tell his parents that he would not be going for Jihād without their consent. (Qurṭubī)

2. From the event reported above, we learn the ruling that anything that rates as a collective obligation - and is not an individual obligation, or necessity - then, sons and daughters cannot do that without the permission of parents. Also included here is the injunction to acquire the most perfect knowledge of religion (the *'ilm* of *dīn*) at the highest level, and to travel to communicate and promote it (the *tablīgh* of *dīn*). It means that anyone who has the knowledge of religion to the measure one is obligated with individually cannot travel in order to become an *'ālim* of *dīn* (scholar of religion), or travel for the *da'wah* and *tablīgh* of *dīn*, for it is not permissible without the permission of parents.

3. Also included under the injunction of treating parents well appearing in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth is good treatment with relatives and friends close to parents, specially when they are dead. In the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The noblest regard one can show to a

father after his death is to treat his friends well." And Sayyidnā Abū Usayd al-Badrī ﷺ reports that he was sitting with the Holy Prophet ﷺ when an Anṣārī came and asked, "Yā Rasūlallah, is it that some right of my parents remains due against me even after they have died?" He said, "Yes. Praying and seeking forgiveness for them, fulfilling the promises they had made to someone, being kind and respectful to their friends and showing mercy and generosity to such relatives who are linked in kinship only through them (*ṣilatu 'r-raḥim*). These are the rights of your parents still due against you, even after them."

It was the blessed habit of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he used to send gifts to lady friends of Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Khadījah رضى الله عنها after her demise which was a way of fulfilling the right of Sayyidah Khadījah on him.

Treating parents well: Special consideration in their old age

As for serving and obeying parents, as parents, it is not restricted to any given time or age. In fact, it is necessary (*wājib*) to treat parents well, under all conditions, and in every age. But, there are circumstances that usually impede the fulfillment of what is necessary and obligatory. Under these circumstances, the typical response pattern of the Holy Qur'ān comes into action to suggest ways and means through which acting according to given injunctions becomes easy. With this objective in sight, it grooms and trains minds through different angles and, at the same time, it continues to emphasize that compliance of these injunctions is imperative despite such circumstances.

The old age of parents, when they become helpless, depend on children for everything they need and their life is at the mercy of children, is a terrible condition to be in. The slightest indifference shown by children at such a time breaks their heart. Then, there are those physical infirmities and diseases associated with old age which make one naturally irritation-prone. Furthermore, during the period of extreme old age, when usual reason and comprehension do not seem to be working, some of their wishes and demands assume the kind of proportions which children find difficult to take care of. The Holy Qur'ān takes cognizance of these circumstances, but, while giving children the instruction to comfort them, it reminds them of their own childhood. It tells them that there was a time when they too were far more helpless, far too depending on

their parents than their parents were on them at that point of time. Then, was it not that their parents sacrificed their desires and comforts for them and went on bearing by the unreasonable child talk with love and affection. Now when they have become so helpless, reason and nobility demanded that the past favor done by them should be paid back. When it was said: كَمَا رَبَّيَانِى صَغِيْرًا (as they have brought me up in my childhood) in the verse, this is what has been alluded to. Some other important instructions relating to the old age of parents have also been given in the verses under study. They are as follows:

1. Do not say even *'uff* to them. Briefly explained parenthetically in the accompanying translation as 'a word of anger or contempt,' *'uff'* covers every word or expression that shows one's displeasure. The limit is that breathing a long breath after having heard what they said and thereby betraying displeasure against them is also included under this very word *'uff.'* In a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā 'Ali ﷺ, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Had there been some other degree of hurting lesser than the saying of *'uff,'* that too would have certainly been mentioned." (The sense is that even the thing that hurts parents in the lowest of the low degree is forbidden).

2. Do not scold them: وَلَاتَنْهَرْهُمَا. This is the second instruction. The word: نهر (*nahr*) in the text: means 'scold' or 'reproach.' That it causes pain in already obvious.

3. Address them with respectable words - (وَقُلْ لَّهُمَا قَوْلاً كَرِيْمًا). This is the third instruction. The first two instructions related to the negative aspects where bringing the least emotional pressure on parents has been prohibited. Given in this third instruction is a lesson in the art of conversation with parents - talk to them softly with love, grace and concern for them. Says the revered Tabi'ī, Sa'īd ibn Mussaiyyab, ' like a slave talking to his strict master!'

4. Submit yourself before them in humility out of compassion - (وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ). This is the fourth instruction. The word: جناح (*janāh*) in the text literally means 'wings' or 'sides of arms' lending the sense that one should stand in a stance of submission and humility as a mark of respect for parents. The addition of the expression: مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ (out of compassion) at the end of the sentence is there to warn that this stance of

grace should not be a mere show-off, instead, it should be adopted on the strong foundation of genuine, heart-felt respect and compassion for them. Perhaps, this may also be suggestive of something else as well - that showing humility before parents is practically no disgrace. In fact, it is a prelude to real honor for it is based on concern, compassion and kindness.

5. And say, "My Lord, be merciful to them" - (وَقُلْ رَّبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا). It means, as for the effort to provide maximum comfort for parents, it is humanly not possible. One should do whatever it is possible for him to do in order that they remain comfortable and, then, along with it, he should also keep praying before Allah Ta'ālā that He, in His infinite mercy, removes all their difficulties and makes things easy on them. This last instruction is really so extensive and universal that it still continues to be valid and beneficial even after the death of parents. Through this, one can always keep serving parents.

Ruling

If parents are Muslims, making a prayer for mercy in their favor is obvious. But, if they are not Muslims, making this prayer within their lifetime will be permissible with the intention that they be delivered from worldly distress and that they be blessed with the *taufīq* of 'Īmān. After their death, making a prayer of mercy for them is not permissible. (Abridged from al-Qurṭubī)

A remarkable event

Al-Qurṭubī has reported from Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh ﷺ that a man came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and complained that his father was taking away what belonged to him. He said, "Go and ask your father to come here." Right then, came Sayyidnā Jibra'īl and told the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "When his father comes, ask him about the words he has composed in his heart and which his own ears have not heard yet." When this man returned with his father, he said to the father, "Why is it that your son complains against you? Do you wish to take away what belongs to him?" The father said, "You better ask him on whom do I spend other than his paternal or maternal aunts or myself?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: إِيْهٍ (an expression which denoted that he had understood the reality and there was no need to say anything else). After that, he asked the father of the man, "What are those words that have not yet been heard by your own ears?" The father said, *"Yā Rasūlallah*, Allah Ta'ālā increases our faith in you through everything." Thereby he meant

that he got to know what was not heard by anyone, which was a miracle indeed. Then, he submitted, "It is true that I had composed some lines of poetry within my heart, something not heard even by my own ears." The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Let us hear them." Then he recited the following lines of poetry he had composed:

غَذَوْتُكَ مَولُودًا وَمُنْتُكَ يافعا
تُعَلُّ بِمَا اَجْنِيْ عَلَيْكَ وَتُنْهَلُ

I fed you in childhood and took care of you when young. You lived on my earnings alone.

إذا ليلة ضافتك بالسقم لم ابت
لسقمك الا ساهرا اتململ

When on some night, you became sick, I spent the whole night remaining awake and restless because of your sickness

كأنّى انا المطروق دونك بالذى
طُرِقْتَ به دونى فعينى تهمل

As if your sickness was my own and not yours and because of which my eyes kept shedding tears throughout the night

تخاف الردٰى نفسى عليك وانها
لَتَعَلَم ان الموتَ وقتٌ مؤجَّل

My heart kept trembling lest something happens to you, though I knew that the time of death is fixed, being neither early nor late

فَلَمَّا بَلَغْتَ السِنَّ والغاية الَّتِىْ
اليها مدى ماكنت فيك أؤمِّل

So, when you reached the age and maturity that I had always been looking forward to

جعلت جزائى غلظةً وفظاظة
كانك أنت المنعم المتفضِّل

Then you made hard-heartedness and harshness my return as if you were the one doing me favors and giving me rewards

فليتكَ اذ لم ترع حقَّ أبوّتى
فعلتَ كما الجارُ المصاقب يفعل

Alas, if it was not possible for you to fulfill my right as a father, you could have at the least done what a good neighbor would have done

فَاَوْلَيْتَنِىْ حَقَّ الْجِوارِ ولم تكن
علىَّ بمال دونَ مالك تَبْخَل

So, you could have given me the least right of a neighbor and

abstained from becoming miserly in my case in my own property.

After having heard these verses of poetry, the Holy Prophet ﷺ held the son by his shirt and said, "انت و مالك لابيك" meaning that: Go. You and your property, everything belongs to your father. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, p. 246, v. 10) These verses have also been reported in Ḥamasah, the famous book of Arabic literature as attributed to the poet, Umaiyyah ibn Abī aṣ-Ṣult. Others say that 'Abd al-A'la wrote them. Still others attribute them to Abū al-'Abbās al-A'ma. (Al-Qurṭubī, marginal notes)

In the last verse quoted above: رَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِيْ نُفُوْسِكُمْ (Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts - 25), any possible scruple that remains in the hearts of children as to how they were going to comply satisfactorily with divine injunctions relating to consistent observance of etiquette and respect due to parents. They have to live with parents all the time. Then, living conditions of the parties vary. They do not stay the same all the time. May be, on some such occasion, they happen to utter something, something that turns out to be against the norms of due etiquette, then, they stand facing the warning of Hell. Given this probability, it would become extremely difficult for them to wriggle out from this situation. In this verse, it is to remove this doubt and heart-burning that it was said: Should any such word come to be uttered out of sheer anxiety or lack of discretion - but, without intentional disrespectfulness - then, one must repent and resolve not to do that ever again. If so, since Allah Ta'ālā knows the secrets of hearts and knows what was uttered was not to show disrespect or hurt, things will turn out for the better, for He is Most-Merciful. The word: الاَوَّابِيْنَ (*al-awwābīn*: those who turn to Him) used here carries the sense of: التَوَّابِيْنَ (*at-tawwābīn*: those who repent before Him). The Ḥadīth calls the six *raka'āt* after Maghrib and the *nawāfil* of al-Ishrāq as the Ṣalāh al-Awwābīn. Embedded here is the hint that the *taufīq* (ability) of these prayers is granted only to those who are the Awwābīn and Tawwābīn.

Verses 26 - 27

وَاٰتِ ذَا الْقُرْبٰى حَقَّهٗ وَالْمِسْكِيْنَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيْلِ وَلَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيْرًا
﴿۲٦﴾ اِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِيْنَ كَانُوْٓا اِخْوَانَ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ ؕ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لِرَبِّهٖ
كَفُوْرًا ﴿۲۷﴾

And give the relative his right, and the needy and the wayfarer. And do not squander recklessly. [26] **Surely, squanderers are brothers to satans, and the Satan is very ungrateful to his Lord.** [27]

Commentary

On fulfilling the rights of relatives vigilantly

Previous verses were devoted to teachings about the rights of parents and how they should be duly respected. In the present verses, the rights of common relatives have been taken up with the guideline that a relative should be given his or her right. The least degree in which this could be done is to share with them the graces of good social living and treat them well. And if they are needy, helping them financially - in accordance with one's personal capacity - is also included therein. From this verse, at least this much stands proved that everyone has also been obligated with the fulfillment of the right of one's common relatives. What is it? How much is it? Those details have not been mentioned here. But, a broad based mercy and generosity for relatives and a good social interaction with them are certainly included there. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, financial help can be extended to two kinds of relatives under this very injunction: (1) A relative, in the category of near blood kinship (*Dhū raḥim*), and in the degree of sanguinity precluding marriage (*maḥram*). A woman or child who neither has the wherewithal to eke out an existence nor has the ability to earn for it. (2) Similar is the case of a relative, in the category of near blood kinship, and in the degree of sanguinity precluding marriage. If handicapped or blind, not having enough money and property in his or her possession to eke out an existence, their relatives who have the necessary means should help them both. Taking care of the essential expenses is a duty enjoined on all of them. If there are several relatives in the same degree of extended means, the expenses will be divided over all of them and the subsistence allowance of the needy will be given in this manner. This rule also has its sanction from the verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah which says: وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَالِكَ (and on the heir it falls likewise - 2:233) (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

In this verse, it has been said that the necessary financial assistance provided to the needy and the wayfarer, and the mercy and generosity practiced in the case of kinsfolk, was their right. The purpose is to point out that the giver has no reason or occasion to harp on the favor done be-

fore or behind them because their right is his duty. The giver is simply doing his duty and not showering favors on anyone.

The prohibition of spending wastefully (*tabdhīr*)

The Qur'ān expresses the sense of spending wastefully through two words: (1) Tabdhīr (تَبۡذِير), translated as 'squandering recklessly.' (2) Iṣrāf (إِسۡرَاف) : extravagance. The prohibition of *tabdhīr* is already clear in verse 26 here. The prohibition of *isrāf* has its proof in the verse of Sūrah al-A'rāf: وَلَا تُسۡرِفُوٓا (and do not be extravagant - 7:33). Some commentators say that both words are synonymous. Any spending in sin or disobedience or a wrong occasion or place is called *tabdhīr* and *isrāf*. There are others who refine it by saying that *tabdhīr* is spending in sin or on some totally unsuitable occasion or place, while *isrāf* is spending beyond the level of need on an occasion where it is permissible to spend. Therefore, *tabdhīr* is emphatically worse than *isrāf*. Al-Mubadhdhirīn (the squanderers) were called brothers to Shaiṭān and his cohorts.

Of the early Tafsīr authorities, Mujāhid has said: If someone spends everything he has for the sake of what is *ḥaqq*, (incumbent), it is no *tabdhīr* (squandering recklessly) - and should he spend even one *mudd* (1/2 kilo) for what is false (non-incumbent), then it is *tabdhīr*. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ said: Spending out of place in what one has not been obligated with is *tabdhīr*. (Maẓharī) Imām Mālik said: Tabdhīr is that one acquires wealth and property, lawfully and cleanly, as he has been obligated to do, but spends it off in ways counter to it - and this is also given the name of *isrāf* (extravagance), which is *ḥarām* (unlawful).

Imām al-Qurṭubī said: As for things unlawful and impermissible, spending even one *dirham* for these is *tabdhīr*. And spending limitlessly to fulfill permissible and allowed desires - which exposes one to the danger of becoming a needy beggar in the future - is also included under *tabdhīr*. Yes, if someone keeps his real capital holdings in tact and goes on to spend its profit liberally to fulfill his permissible desires, then, that is not included under *tabdhīr*. (Al-Qurṭubī, v. 10, p. 248)

Verse 28

وَإِمَّا تُعۡرِضَنَّ عَنۡهُمُ ابۡتِغَآءَ رَحۡمَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ تَرۡجُوهَا فَقُل لَّهُمۡ قَوۡلًا

مَّيْسُورًا ﴿٢٨﴾

And if you turn away from them while seeking a bounty from your Lord you are expecting, then speak to them in polite words. [28]

Commentary

What an unusual moral training is being given here in this verse through the Holy Prophet ﷺ to the entire Muslim community! It is being said to them: If people needing help come to you and you have nothing to give to them, and for that reason you are compelled to turn away from them, even then, this act of turning away or excusing yourself should not be with an air of indifference, or with an attitude that could be insulting for the addressee. In fact, this turning away or seeking of excuse should be coupled with an expression of your inability or constraint.

Regarding the background of the revelation of this verse, a report from Sayyidnā Ibn Zaid رضي الله عنه says that some people used to ask for financial help from the Holy Prophet ﷺ and he knew what would be given to them would be spent in the spreading of disorder. Therefore, he refused to give it to them, for this refusal was a device to stop them from indulging in disorder. Thereupon, this verse was revealed. (Qurṭubī)

In the Musnad of Sa'īd ibn Manṣūr, it has been mentioned on the authority of Sayyidnā Saba' ibn Ḥakam رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had received some supply of cloth. He distributed it over those deserving. After that came some others when the supply was finished and he had nothing to give. It was about the later that this verse was revealed.

Verses 29 - 30

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ
مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا ﴿٢٩﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ إِنَّهُ
كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾

And do not keep your hand tied to your neck, nor extend it to the full extent, lest you should be sitting reproached, empty-handed. [29]

Indeed, your Lord expands sustenance for whomsoever He wills, and constricts (for whom He wills). Surely, He is All Aware of His servants, All-Seeing. [30]

Commentary

The instruction for moderation in spending

In this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the direct addressee while the entire Muslim *ummah* is being addressed through him. The purpose is to teach a just and moderate course in spending which does not prevent one from helping others nor does it end up in a lot of trouble for him. There is an event in the background of the revelation of this verse. Ibn Marduwayh has reported it on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه and al-Baghawī, on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir رضي الله عنه. According to this report, a boy came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said, "My mother asks of you a shirt." At that time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had no shirt except the one that was on his blessed body. He told the boy, "Come some other time when we have enough means to respond to what your mother is asking for." The boy went back home, and returned and said, "My mother says that you kindly give her the very shirt you have on your blessed body." Hearing this, the Holy Prophet ﷺ took the shirt off and let him have it. His body was left bare. Came the time for Ṣalāh. Sayyidnā Bilāl رضي الله عنه called the Adhān. But, when he did not come out as usual, people were worried. When some of them went in, they saw that he was sitting bare-bodied without the shirt. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

Spending in the way of Allah so liberally as would throw one in trouble: The pros and cons of it

The verse, given the outer view, seems to prohibit the kind of spending following which the spender himself ends up becoming poor and needy, a prey of all sorts of hardships and anxieties. Tafsīr authority, al-Qurṭubī has said that this injunction covers the general condition of Muslims who would, after such spending, find the resulting hardships distressing and the whole thing would make them contrite over past give-outs and grieve about it. The word: مَّحْسُورًا (*maḥsūrā*: empty-handed - 29) of the Holy Qur'ān provides a hint in this direction. (As in Tafsīr Maẓharī) As for the people of high determination, who would not be emotionally disturbed by hardships that may come later and would still go on fulfilling rights of those who hold such rights, this restriction does not

apply to them. This is the reason that it was the customary practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he would not store anything for tomorrow. What came today was spent out today. And there were occasions when he would remain hungry reaching the outer limits of having to tie a piece of rock against his stomach (to simulate the weight of food). Then there were many among the noble Ṣaḥābah who had spent their entire wealth and property in the way of Allah during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who did not categorically prohibit it nor did he blame them for it. This tells us that the prohibition contained in this verse is for those who cannot brave the hardships of poverty and hunger and they would start to rue after spending that they would have been better off if they had not spent in the way of Allah. If so, this attitude would nullify the good they had done in the past. Hence, the prohibition.

Poorly managed spending is prohibited

And the main thing in the verse is that it prohibits spending haphazardly in the sense that one would ignore what may happen in the near future and spend on the spot. The result is that comes tomorrow, other needy people show up or one is required to take care of a major religious exigency and he would, then, be in no position to help out. (Qurṭubī) Or, he may be rendered equally incapable of fulfilling the rights of his family, something he is duty-bound to fulfill. (Maẓharī) Explaining the words: مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا (reproached, empty-handed - 29), Tafsīr Maẓharī says that the first word: مَلُوم (*malūm*) relates to the first condition, that is, miserliness - meaning 'if he were to hold back on giving out of miserliness, people would reproach him.' And the word: مَحْسُورًا (*mahsūrā*) relates to some condition other than this - meaning that 'one should not exaggerate in spending to the extent that he himself becomes a pauper. If so, he will turn empty-handed, defeated and rueful.

Verse 31

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوٓا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ ۖ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطْـًٔا كَبِيرًا ﴿٣١﴾

And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide sustenance to them and to you, too. Killing them is a great sin indeed. [31]

Commentary

Previous verses carried a series of instructions regarding human rights. The sixth injunction appearing here is to correct a cruel custom prevailing among the people of Arabs of Jāhiliyyah. During that period of time, some people used to kill their children, particularly daughters, at birth in fear of having to face the expenses on their maintenance. In the verse cited above, Allah Ta'ālā has admonished them for their ignorance in assuming the responsibility of providing sustenance - 'who are you to do that?' This is the exclusive domain of Allah Ta'ālā. He is the One who gives you your sustenance. Now, He who gives it to you shall be the One who would give it to them as well. Why then, do you have to take the onus of killing children on yourselves because of this concern? In fact, by making the children precede as recipients of sustenance at this place, Allah Ta'ālā has subtly indicated that He shall give to the children first, then give it to the parents. It really means that Allah Ta'ālā, when He sees His servant supporting his family or helping others poor and weak, He gives him liberally in proportion to enable him to meet his needs as well as help others. In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "إِنَّمَا تُنصَرُوْنَ وَتُرْزَقُوْنَ بِضُعَفَائِكُم" which means: 'It is because of the poor and weak among you that you are provided by Allah with your sustenance.' This tells us that parents who support their family get, whatever they do, for the sake of weak women and children alone.

Ruling

This statement of the Qur'ān also sheds light on an issue which holds the modern world in its grip. Its movers and shakers are so scared of what they call 'population explosion' that they are frantically promoting birth control and planned parent-hood. This is also based on the same false assumption that they are the ones responsible for sustenance. May be, this approach is not a sin equal in gravity to that of the killing of children, but there is no doubt about its being blameworthy.

Verse 32

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزِّنٰىٓ إِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً ؕ وَسَآءَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٣٢﴾

And do not even go near fornication. It is indeed a

shame and an evil way to follow. [32]

Commentary

The seventh injunction given here relates to the forbiddance of *zinā* (fornication, adultery). Given here are two reasons as to why it has been forbidden: (1) This is a shame, gross and immodest. Whoever is denuded of modesty is denuded of human nobility itself and is rendered incapable of distinguishing the good from the bad. This is more succinctly said in a Ḥadīth:

اذا فاتك الحياء فافعل ماشئت

> When goes your sense of shame (that could become a barrier against evil), so then, you will do what you will.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has declared sense of shame (*ḥayā'*) as a division of faith ('Īmān): 'والحياء شعبة من الايمان' (al-Bukhārī) (2) It generates limitless social disorder the consequences of which sometimes destroy whole groups of people. In our day all sorts of crimes have increased. If investigated, the reason behind a lot of them would turn out to be some man or woman who did it. Though, this crime is not directly related to the rights of the servants of Allah but it may have been mentioned here as part of other rights taken up at this place for the reason that this crime is contagious. It brings other crimes along which disturb the rights of the servants of Allah through loss of lives and properties. Therefore, Islam has declared this crime to be more serious than any other crime. Then, it has also fixed its punishment as the harshest of all crimes because this one is a carrier of hundreds of these.

It appears in Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The heavens and the earth, the seven of them each, curse the married person who commits adultery. And the strong stench which spreads out from the private parts of such people will embarrass even the people condemned to Hell and thus there in Hell they will be suffering from the punishment of fire and disgrace both." (Reported by al-Bazzār on the authority of Sayyidnā Buraidah ؓ - Maẓharī) In another Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "A fornicator when fornicating is not a believer. A thief when stealing is not a believer. And a drunkard while drinking is not a believer." This Ḥadīth is there in al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Its explanation, as it appears in the report of

Abū Dāwūd, says: At the time those committing such crimes are practically involved in it, 'Īmān (faith) leaves their heart and comes out, and when they turn away from it, 'Īmān returns back in. (Maẓharī)

Verse 33

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِیْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُوْمًا فَقَدْ
جَعَلْنَا لِوَلِیِّهٖ سُلْطٰنًا فَلَا یُسْرِفْ فِّی الْقَتْلِ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ مَنْصُوْرًا ﴿۳۳﴾

And do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity, except for a just reason. And whoever is killed unjustly, We have given his *walīy* (legal heir) authority, but he shall not cross the limit in the matter of taking life. He is surely supported. [33]

Commentary

This eighth injunction is about the prohibition of killing unjustly. Virtually all groups, religions and sects of the world take it to be a grave crime. In Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The destruction of the entire world is lighter in the sight of Allah than the unjust killing of a believer." In addition to this, some reports also carry the words: "Even if the inhabitants of Allah's seven heavens and seven earths were to join in the killing of a believer unjustly, He will put all of them into the Hell." (Ibn Mājah with a chain classified as Ḥasan and al-Baihaqī - from Maẓharī)

And in another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "Whoever abets in the killing of a believer by assisting the killer even with one word will be brought before Allah Ta'ālā on the day of Resurrection. And written on his forehead shall be: آیس من رحمة الله (Deprived of the mercy of Allah). (Maẓharī from Ibn Mājah and Iṣbahānī)

And al-Baihaqī reports on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Hopefully, Allah Ta'ālā may forgive every sin except that of the person who died in the state of disbelief (*kufr*) or who killed a believer intentionally and unjustly."

The meaning of Unjust Killing

Imām al-Bukhārī and Muslim have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The blood

of any Muslim who bears testimony that Allah is one and I am His Messenger is not *ḥalāl* (lawful) except under three situations. (1) He has, despite being married, committed adultery (for his legal punishment is that he should be stoned to death). (2) He who has killed a person unjustly [for his punishment is that the *walīyy* (legal heir) of the person killed can get him killed under the law of *qiṣāṣ* (even retaliation)]. (3) A person who has reneged [as an apostate: *murtadd*] from the religion of Islam (for he too is killed in punishment).

Who has the right to take Qiṣāṣ?

It has been said in this verse that this is the right of the *walīyy* (legal heir) of the person killed. In the absence of a lineal *walīyy*, the head of the Islamic government will have this right - for, he too, in a way, is the *walīyy* of all Muslims. Therefore, in Islamic juristic terminology, the former is called real and the later, legal.

Injustice is not answered by injustice, but by justice: So, be just even when punishing criminals

The statement: فَلَا يُسْرِفْ فِّي الْقَتْلِ (*'falā yusrif fi al-qatl'*: but he shall not cross the limit in the matter of taking life) is a special provision of Islamic law the outcome of which is that it is not permissible to avenge injustice by counter injustice. Even when retaliating, it is necessary to uphold the demand of justice. Until such time that the legal heir (*walīyy*) of the person killed upholds justice and seeks an even retaliation in favor of the person killed represented by him, through the legal provisions of Qiṣāṣ, then, the law of the Sharī'ah stands in his favor. The reason is that he is surely supported, and Allah Ta'ālā is the supporter. And in case, he is all blinded by the desire of revenge and exceeds the limits of Islamic legal retaliation, then he, instead of being the one oppressed (*maẓlūm*), became the oppressor (*ẓālim*) while the oppressor (*ẓālim*) became the one oppressed by him (*maẓlūm*). Now things will stand reversed. Allah Ta'ālā and His Law will not support him. Instead, it will support the other party and shield him from injustice.

During the days of the Jāhiliyyah, it was common practice of the Arabs that, in retaliation of a person killed, they would avenge him by killing anyone they could lay their hands on from among the family or friends of the killer. There were occasions when it would turn out that the person killed was someone notable among them. In that case, they

would not take it as sufficient to kill only the killer in even retaliation for their man. In fact, to avenge one life, they would take the lives of two, three or many more men. Some of them would become so crazy in the heat of their passion for revenge that they would not be simply satisfied after having killed the killer. They went on to commit the horror of cutting off body parts such as the nose, ears etc. to serve as deterrents. All such actions are extra to the limits set by the Islamic Law of Even Retaliation (*al-qiṣāṣ*), and are patently *ḥarām* (unlawful). Therefore, such activities have been stopped by the proviso: فَلَا يُسْرِفْ فِّي الْقَتْلِ (but he shall not cross the limit in the matter of taking life).

An anecdote worth remembering

Someone accused Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf before certain Mujtahid Imāms. Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf is the most notorious tyrant of Islamic history. Since, he has killed thousands of Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn unjustly, therefore, it generally happens that people tend to overlook the evil lurking behind calling him evil. The pious elder before whom this accusation was leveled against Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf asked the accusers, "Do you have any authority or evidence to support your accusation?" They said, "No." Then he said, "If Allah Ta'ālā will avenge the unjust killing of thousands of innocent people by Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, remember that anyone who is unjust to Ḥajjāj will also not be allowed to escape from that revenge. Allah Ta'ālā will wreak vengeance of Ḥajjāj from him too. There is no partisanship in the justice of Allah Ta'ālā, therefore, it is not possible that He would release others to go about maligning His sinning servants by giving them a free hand to accuse and blame them at will.

Verses 34 - 35

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ ۖ وَأَوْفُوا
بِالْعَهْدِ ۖ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٤﴾ وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كِلْتُمْ وَزِنُوا
بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴿٣٥﴾

And do not go near the property of an orphan except in a manner that is good, until he comes to his maturity. And fulfill the covenant. Surely, the covenant shall be asked about. [34]

And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with a straight balance. That is good, and better in the end. [35]

Commentary

Mentioned in the two verses cited above, there are three injunctions: the ninth, the tenth and the eleventh. They relate to financial rights. It will be recalled that previous verses dealt with physical rights while the financial ones appear here.

Caution in handling the property of orphans

The ninth injunction given in the first verse (34) concerns the protection of properties owned by orphans and the observation of caution in their handling. Laying emphasis on it, it was said: 'And do not go (even) near the property of orphans.' It means that there should be no free use of their property counter to the provisions of the Sharī'ah or the interest and advantage of the children. Those who are charged with the protection and management of the properties of orphans are duty-bound to observe utmost caution therein. When spending, they must spend only in the interest and to the advantage of orphans - and definitely not as based on their whim or lack of concern. And this pattern of management is to continue until such time when the orphaned children grow up and become capable of protecting their property themselves - the lower limit is when they attain to the age of fifteen years while the higher is eighteen years.

The fact is that it is just not permissible to spend from anyone's property through false means. But, it has been mentioned here in the case of orphans particularly because they themselves are incapable of keeping or taking account and no one is expected to know about it. So, a place where no one is present to demand one's right is exactly the place where the demand of Allah Ta'ālā becomes stronger and harder. Any shortfall in disbursing such rights becomes more sinful as compared to the rights of common people.

Fulfillment of Covenants and Implementation of Contracts

The tenth injunction enjoins the fulfillment of the covenant. There are two forms of the covenant. The first form has two aspects to it: (1) Between Allah and His servant, like the covenant of the servant in eternity that Allah is their Lord. This covenant necessarily results in

obedience to His injunctions and the seeking of His pleasure. This is a covenant every human being has made in eternity irrespective of whether he or she is a believer or a disbeliever. (2) The second covenant is the covenant of a believer made through *shahādah* or professing of the *kalimah:* لا اله الا الله (*lā ilāha illallāh*: there is no god but Allah) the outcome of which is a perfect following of Divine injunctions and the seeking of His pleasure.

The second form of the covenant takes effect between human beings themselves. This includes all treaties, pacts, agreements, pledges and contracts - political, commercial, or transactional - that are made between individuals or groups or institutions all over the world.

The fulfillment of all covenants identified in the first form is obligatory on human beings. As for the other kind of covenants or contracts, it is also obligatory to fulfill them subject to the condition that they should not be against the Islamic Law. As for those that are against the Islamic Law, it is obligatory to terminate them - after having first served a notice on the other party. If one of the parties does not fulfill, the other party has the right to go to the court and make them fulfill it. Essentially, a contract is an agreement between two parties that they would do or not do something. And in case, someone unilaterally promises to someone else that he would give him a certain thing or meet him at a certain time or take care of a certain task for him, then, it is also obligatory to fulfill this promise. There are commentators who include this too under the sense of covenant, but they do so with a slight difference. We know when two parties are bound by a contract, any contravention by one of them can be challenged in the court and the other party can force its completion. But, the fulfillment of a unilateral promise cannot be enforced through the court. Of course, if someone were to go back on the promise made to someone else - without any valid legal excuse permitted by the Sharī'ah - he will be committing a sin. In Ḥadīth, this has been called hypocrisy in acts.

At the end of this verse, it was said: إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا (Surely, the covenant shall be asked about). It means: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, the way questions shall be asked about the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of obligatory divine injunctions, so it will be with mutual contracts - these too

will be asked about.' Here, it has been left at that only: 'it will be asked about.' What is going to happen next after the questioning? This has been left untold. Perhaps, intended as such, it may be signaling towards the danger being great!

The eleventh injunction enjoins fulfillment of weights and measures in transactions of buying and selling and forbids any short measuring. Full details appear in Sūrah al-Muṭaffifīn (83).

Ruling

Respected jurists of Islam say that the outcome of the injunction against shortening weights and measures is that it is *ḥarām* (unlawful) to give less than whatever is the due of whoever it may be. Therefore, it is also included therein that an employee curtails the assigned duty entrusted with him or gives a time that is less than what should actually be given to it, or that a worker shirks work and fails to deliver what is due out of it.

The prohibition of giving weights and measures short: Ruling

Regarding the verse: أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كِلْتُمْ (And give full measure when you measure - 35), Abū Ḥayyān says in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ that the responsibility of giving full weight and measure in this verse has been placed on the seller (بائع : *bā'i'*) which tells us that it is the seller who is responsible for weighing, measuring and seeing that it is full as due.

At the end of verse 35, it was said about the fulfillment of weight and measure: ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَّأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيْلًا (That is good, and better in the end). As for making the weight and measure correct and even, two things have been said here: (1) Firstly, the rule is good. It means that it is intrinsically good. No normal and decent person is going to take weighing less and measuring short as something nice, neither religiously, nor rationally, nor naturally. (2) Secondly, it is better in the end. The end includes the consequent success of the Hereafter, reward of deeds and the blessing of Paradise as well as the happy outcome of the very life in this world. This is suggestive of the fact that no business can prosper until its goodwill stands recognized in the market - and that cannot happen without this commercial honesty.

Verses 36 - 38

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهٖ عِلْمٌ ۭ اِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ
اُولٰۗىِٕكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْـُٔوْلًا ﴿۳۶﴾ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِی الْاَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۚ اِنَّكَ لَنْ
تَخْرِقَ الْاَرْضَ وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُوْلًا ﴿۳۷﴾ كُلُّ ذٰلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهٗ
عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوْهًا ﴿۳۸﴾

And do not pursue that which you have no knowledge of. Surely, the ear, the eye and the heart - each one of them shall be interrogated about. [36]

And do not walk on the earth haughtily. You can neither tear the earth apart, nor can you match the mountains in height. [37]

That which is evil, of all these, is detestable in the sight of your Lord. [38]

Commentary

Two injunctions in these verses, the twelfth and the thirteenth, relate to mores of common social living. The twelfth injunction forbids doing something without having become certain about it.

At this stage, we should not lose sight of the fact that certainty has different degrees. There is a degree of certainty that reaches the level of perfect certitude, a state that leaves no room of even the slightest doubt contrary to it. Then, it could descend to the degree of strong likelihood - even though, there does exist the probability of a contrary aspect. Similarly, divine injunctions are also of two kinds: (1) Absolutes and Certainties, such as, Articles and Principles of Religion. These require certainty of the first degree. Acting without it is not permissible. (2) Strong Likelihood or Overwhelming Probability, the example of which are injunctions relating to subsidiary deeds. After having given these details, we can state the objective of the cited verse by saying that the element of certainty in injunctions that are Certain and Absolute should also be of the first degree. In other words, it should have attained the degree of perfect certitude and absolute category. And until this happens, this pseudo certainty is not trustworthy in the matter of the basic Articles and Principles of Islam. Acting on its dictates is not permissible. As for the subsidi-

ary injunctions, a certainty of the second degree, that is, of Overwhelming Probability is sufficient. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Questions will be asked on the day of Qiyāmah about the ear, the eye and the heart

This is what we have been told in verse 36: إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا: It means that the ear will be asked as to what did it keep hearing throughout its life. The eye will be asked as to what did it keep seeing throughout its life. The heart will be asked as to what did it keep cooking in its chambers and what was it that it believed in throughout its life. If things were heard through the ears, the hearing of which was not permissible in Sharī'ah, such as hearing ill of someone behind his back (*ghībah*) or hearing unlawful vocal and instrumental music etc., then, punishment will follow the question. If things were seen through the eyes, the seeing of which was not permissible, such as casting an evil eye on a non-Maḥram woman or a beardless, handsome youth etc. then, punishment will follow the question. Or, planted a belief in the heart contrary to the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, or nursed a baseless blame in the heart regarding someone, then, punishment will follow the question. The fact is that, on that fateful day of Qiyāmah, questions will be asked about virtually all blessings given by Allah Ta'ālā. It was said in Sūrah at-Takāthur: لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ : "And you shall certainly be asked on that day [of Qiyāmah] about all blessings [of Allah Ta'ālā] - 102:8." Since, the ear, the eye and the heart are more important and significant out of these blessings, these were mentioned here particularly.

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Maẓharī give yet another sense of the verse in terms of the close proximity of the statement in the first sentence and the next. In the first sentence, it was said: لَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ (And do not pursue that which you have no knowledge of - 36). Adjacent to it follows the statement that the ear, the eye and the heart - each one of them shall be interrogated about. The sense that emerges from this proximity is that a person who blamed someone without first ascertaining and becoming certain about it, or did something impulsively without doing that first, then, should this thing be related to what is heard through ears, the ears shall be questioned. And if this is 'seen', the eyes shall be questioned. And if comprehended through the heart, the heart shall be questioned to determine whether this person is true or false in his blame or

in the belief he has allowed to become rooted in his heart. Thereupon, these very body parts shall speak up as witnesses on the day of Resurrection. It will be a cause of disgrace for those who accuse others without being certain and those who do things the truth of which has not been ascertained first. This is as it appears in Sūrah Yā Sīn: اَلْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلٰٓى اَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَآ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ اَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ :"Today [on the day of Qiyāmah] We shall set a seal on their mouths and their hands shall speak and their feet shall bear witness as to what they have been earning [by making these limbs of their body do whatever of good or bad they chose] - 36:65".

Perhaps, the ears, the eyes and the heart have been particularized here on the basis that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed man with sense and consciousness through them. The purpose is to let him first ascertain, examine, and test a thought or belief that crosses his heart. If he finds it true, and sound, let him, then, put it in practice. And should it turn out to be false, let him, then, stay away from it. Anyone who does not use these faculties and goes about following things he has no knowledge of, things the truth of which he has not ascertained first, then, this person is guilty of being ungrateful to these blessings of Allah Ta'ālā.

Now, the senses through which man becomes aware of different things are five: the ears, the eyes, the nose, the faculty of speech and the sensation in the whole body that tells one about something being hot or cold. But, habitually man finds out more through the ears and eyes. Awareness about things acquired through the senses of smell, taste and touch is fairly lower in frequency as compared to things heard or seen. That it has been considered sufficient to mention only two of the five senses at this place may, perhaps, be because of this very reason. Then, even from among these two, it is the ear that has been made to precede the eye - and on other occasions of the Holy Qur'ān as well, wherever these two has been mentioned, it is the ear that has been mentioned first. In all likelihood, the reason for it is that the major part of man's information is comprised of things heard through the ears. Things seen through the eyes happen to be comparatively much less.

The thirteenth injunction appearing in the second of the two cited verses (37) is: وَلَا تَمْشِ فِى الْاَرْضِ مَرَحًا (And do not walk on the earth haughtily). It means that one should not walk in a way that shows arrogance, pride and exultation, for this is an idiotic act. It is as if one would like to

tear the earth apart just by walking on it - something not in his power to accomplish. Or, as if by walking with a challenging gait, he would like to rise much higher - but the mountains of Allah rise far higher than he could ever beat anatomically. In reality, arrogance as such is a major sin that can afflict human heart mortally. Therefore, one must guard against even signs of arrogance exhibited through the way one goes about in life, for they too are impermissible, after all. Walking haughtily, even though one may not be walking by exerting force on the earth, and assuming airs and posing high are impermissible under all conditions. Arrogance is to take yourself superior to others and rate others to be inferior to you. Severe warnings against it appear in Ḥadīth.

Imām Muslim has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Iyāḍ ibn 'Ammār ﵁ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah Ta'ālā has sent this command to me through revelation: Take to humility. Let no man pride on another man, nor adopt an attitude of self-eminence and let no one be unjust to anyone." (Maẓharī)

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﵁ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Not to enter Paradise is he who has arrogance in his heart even to the measure of a particle" (Maẓharī with reference to the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim).

And it has been reported in Ḥadīth Qudsī on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﵁ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah Ta'ālā says that grandeur is My mantle and greatness is My breech. Whoever tries to snatch these from Me, him I shall put in Jahannam (The words *ridā'* and *izār* signify dress and Allah Ta'ālā has no mass or body that would need a dress. Therefore, at this place, it means the attribute of divine glory. So, whoever betrays the wish to become associated with Allah Ta'ālā in this attribute belongs to Hell).

And in another Ḥadīth the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, arrogant people will be raised as humans scaled down to the size of tiny ants under the shadow of disgrace descending from all sides. They will be driven to a prison of Hell called Bulas. It will be surrounded with blazing fire, the highest around, and they will be drinking pus and blood excreted by the inmates of Hell to quench their thirst." (Tirmidhī on the authority of 'Amr ibn Shu'aib, he from his

father, he from his grandfather - Maẓharī)

And speaking from the pulpit, Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ said, "I have heard from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that a person who takes to humility, Allah Ta'ālā elevates him to higher ranks following which he is, though, insignificant in his own sight, but he is great in the sight of everybody else. And whoever waxes proud, him Allah Ta'ālā puts to disgrace following which he is, though, great in his own sight but he is, in the sight of people, worse than a dog and pig." (Maẓharī)

After having described details of the injunctions appearing above, it was said in the last verse: كُلُّ ذٰلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوْهًا (That which is evil, of all these, is detestable in the sight of your Lord - 38).

As for what has been forbidden in the said injunctions, their repugnance is obvious. But, within these there are some commandments where rights of parents and relatives have been enjoined or fulfillment of promises has been made mandatory. Here too, the purpose is to avoid doing the opposite of it, like hurting parents, breaking off from relatives and going back on solemn promises. Since all these things are *ḥarām* or reprehensible, therefore, it has been called *'makrūh'* in a general sense of 'detestable' which includes the *ḥarām* and *makrūh* both. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Note

The injunctions described in the fifteen verses cited above are, in a way, the explanation of the effort acceptable in the sight of Allah mentioned in: وَسَعٰى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا (and makes effort for it as due - 19). There it was said that not every effort is acceptable with Allah. Instead, the effort made in accordance with the Sunnah and teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the only one acceptable with Him. Main divisions of such acceptable effort have been mentioned in these injunctions which take up the rights of Allah first and then the rights of the servants of Allah.

A gist of Torah in fifteen verses

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said that the commandments of the entire Torah have been reduced to fifteen verses of Sūrah Banī

Isrā'īl. (Maẓharī)

Verses 39 - 44

ذٰلِكَ مِمَّآ اَوْحٰى اِلَيْكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ ؕ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا
اٰخَرَ فَتُلْقٰى فِىْ جَهَنَّمَ مَلُوْمًا مَّدْحُوْرًا ﴿٣٩﴾ اَفَاَصْفٰكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِالْبَنِيْنَ
وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنَاثًا ؕ اِنَّكُمْ لَتَقُوْلُوْنَ قَوْلًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٤٠﴾ ع وَلَقَدْ
صَرَّفْنَا فِىْ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ لِيَذَّكَّرُوْا ؕ وَمَا يَزِيْدُهُمْ اِلَّا نُفُوْرًا ﴿٤١﴾ قُلْ
لَّوْ كَانَ مَعَهٗٓ اٰلِهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِذًا لَّابْتَغَوْا اِلٰى ذِى الْعَرْشِ سَبِيْلًا
﴿٤٢﴾ سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يَقُوْلُوْنَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيْرًا ﴿٤٣﴾ تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ
السَّمٰوٰتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْاَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيْهِنَّ ؕ وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَىْءٍ اِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ
بِحَمْدِهٖ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تَفْقَهُوْنَ تَسْبِيْحَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ حَلِيْمًا غَفُوْرًا ﴿٤٤﴾

This is part of the Wisdom your Lord has revealed to you. And do not set up any other god along with Allah, lest you should be thrown into Jahannam, blamed, rejected. [39]

Is it, then, that your Lord has chosen you to have sons and has Himself taken females from among the angels? Surely, you are saying something terrible. [40]

And surely, We have explained things in various ways in this Qur'ān, so that they may take advice - and it increases nothing in them but aversion. [41]

Say, 'Had there been other gods along with Him', as they say, 'then they would have found out a way to the Lord of the Throne'. [42] **Pure is He, and Exalted, immensely above what they say.** [43]

All the seven skies and the earth and all those therein extol His purity. And there is not a single thing that does not extol His purity and praise, but you do not understand their extolling. Surely He is Forbearing, Most-Forgiving. [44]

Commentary

According to the proof of Tauḥīd (the Oneness of Allah) given in the verse: إِذًا لَّابْتَغَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا (then they would have found out a way to the Lord of the Throne - 42), Allah alone is the creator, owner and master of the entire universe. The argument is if it was not so and He had other partners in this godhead, differences would have necessarily emerged among them. And, in the eventuality of a difference, the whole universal system would have gone to ruins - because, ever abiding peace among them is habitually impossible. Though, this argument has been enunciated here in a prohibitive manner, but there are books of Scholastic Theology ('Ilm al-Kalām) where the logical rationale behind this argument has also been described in great details. The learned may consult these at their discretion.

The meaning of Tasbīḥ (glorification of Allah) said by the heavens and the earth and everything present therein

Among these, the Tasbīḥ of Allah said by all angels and believing *jinn* and human beings is self-evident. Everyone knows that. As for disbelieving human beings and the *jinn,* they obviously do not say it. Similarly, there are other things in this universe about which it is said that they are insensate, devoid of reason and intelligence. How do we rationalize their act of saying Tasbīḥ? Some 'Ulamā' say that their Tasbīḥ is circumstantial, state-articulated, the testimony of their state of being - because, the collective condition of everything other than Allah Ta'ālā is telling us that it is neither permanent existence-wise nor survival-wise. This whole ongoing condition has been activated under the power and control of some supreme power - this testimony is its Tasbīḥ.

But, other investigative scholars say that volitional Tasbīḥ of Allah is particular with angels and believing *jinns* and human beings. But, in terms of the state of His orientation towards what He has created, Allah Ta'ālā has cast every particle of this universe into the mould of a chanter of His glory. As regards those who do not believe, or do not believe in institutional religion, they too generally subscribe to God and His greatness. Then, there are materialists, atheists, and modern-day communists who do not obviously subscribe to the existence of God. But, the

truth of the matter is that the very existence of theirs, inclusive of all that constitutes it, is compulsively busy glorifying Allah - just as trees, rocks and dust and a zillion other things are busy recounting the glory of the most true Allah. But, this act of glorification, this Tasbīḥ they are all engaged in, is built-in, compulsively ingrained and is responding to the call of the creational imperative. Common people do not hear it. The statement of the Qur'ān: وَلٰكِنْ لَّاتَفْقَهُوْنَ تَسْبِيْحَهُمْ (but you do not understand their extolling [the act of glorifying Allah] - 17:44) proves that this originally and elementally ingrained act of extolling Allah performed by everything en masse is something common people cannot understand. As far as circumstantially discernable act of extolling is concerned, intelligent people can identify it readily. This tells us that the act of extolling we are talking about is not simply a testimony of the incumbent's state of existence in the universe. It is real - though, beyond our comprehension. (As mentioned by al-Qurṭubī)

As for the phenomenon of pebbles saying *tasbīḥ* (glory be to Allah) in the blessed hand of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and which was clearly heard by the noble Ṣaḥābah, it is obviously a miracle. But, Shaykh Jalāluddīn as-Suyūṭī while explaining this Ḥadīth in al-Khaṣāiṣ al-Kubrā has said that pebbles saying *tasbīḥ* is not the miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As regards pebbles, they say *tasbīḥ* wherever they are. In fact, what is his miracle is that once the pebbles were in his blessed hand that *tasbīḥ* said by them became audible.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has declared this refinement as weightier and has supported it with many proofs from the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. For example, it was said about Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام in Sūrah Ṣād: اِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهٗ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْاِشْرَاقِ (We subjugated the mountains with him which used to glorify Allah, evening and morning - 48:18). And it was said about rocks in a verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَاِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ (and there are still others [rocks] which fall down in fear of Allah - 2:74). This proves that rocks have consciousness, sense and the fear of Allah. Then, refuting Christians calling Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام Son of God, it was said in a verse of Sūrah Maryam: وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا اَنْ دَعَوْا لِلرَّحْمٰنِ وَلَدًا (and the mountains fall down crumbling that they attribute to the Raḥmān [Most-Merciful

Allah] a son - 19:90,91). Again, it is evident that mountains crumbling in fear are indicative of their consciousness and sense. And once it is conceded that they have sense and consciousness, the saying of *tasbīḥ* by them should not be considered something improbable.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ said, "a mountain says to the other mountain, 'say, O brother, has a man ever gone across you, someone who was good at remembering Allah?' If it says, 'yes,' this mountain is pleased with him." For his proof, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Mas'ūd recited the verse: وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمٰنُ وَلَدًا (And they say, "the Raḥmān [Most-Merciful Allah] has taken a son" - 19:88). After that, he said, "this verse proves it that mountains are affected by listening to words of blasphemy (*kufr*) and are, thereupon, seized by fear. This being the truth, do you think that they listen to what is false and do not listen to what is true (*ḥaqq*), do not hear Allah being remembered (*dhikr*) and are not affected by it?" (Qurṭubī with reference to Raqā'iq ibn Mubārak) And the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "there is no *jinn,* man, tree, rock and common clod of earth that hears the call of the Muezzin (*mu'adhdhin*), and does not bear witness to his faith and righteousness on the day of Qiyāmah." (Mu'aṭṭā Imām Mālik and Sunan Ibn Mājah on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ).

Imām al-Bukhārī رحمة الله عليه has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ, who said, "we used to hear the sound of *tasbīḥ* (glory to Allah) said by the food when it was being eaten." And a variant appears in another report where it is said, "when we ate with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, we used to hear the sound of *tasbīḥ* said by the food." And as narrated by Sayyidnā Jābir ibn Samurah ﷺ, it appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I know the rock of Makkah al-Mukarramah that used to say *'salām'* to me before the call of prophet-hood - and I know it even now." Some say, 'the reference is to al-Ḥajar al-Aswad.' Allah knows best.

Imām al-Qurṭubī رحمة الله عليه has said that Ḥadīth reports relating to such matters abound. As for the story of Usṭuwanah Hannānah (the dried tree serving as a column for support when the Holy Prophet ﷺ

gave his Khuṭbah in the Masjid), it is common knowledge among Muslims all over the world. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ bypassed it while starting to deliver his Khuṭbah from a regular *mimbar* (stepped-platform), the noble Ṣaḥābah heard the sound of wailing coming from it.

After all these reports, why should it remain so far out to realize that everything in the heavens and the earth has consciousness and sense and that everything really glorifies Allah. Ibrāhīm رحمه الله تعالى says that this *tasbīḥ* is universal. It includes the animate and the inanimate both. So much so that the least sound made by the panels of doors are not devoid of *tasbīḥ*. Imām al-Qurṭubī has said, 'If this glorification of Allah was a state-articulated *tasbīḥ*, why was it made so particular to Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام in the verse referred to a little earlier? A state-articulated *tasbīḥ* is something every discerning human being can sense out from everything. This makes it obvious that this *tasbīḥ* was spoken, verbally and audibly.

Verses 45 - 48

وَاِذَا قَرَاْتَ الْقُرْاٰنَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ
حِجَابًا مَّسْتُوْرًا ﴿٤٥﴾ وَّجَعَلْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اَكِنَّةً اَنْ يَّفْقَهُوْهُ وَفِيْٓ
اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ۗ وَاِذَا ذَكَرْتَ رَبَّكَ فِى الْقُرْاٰنِ وَحْدَهٗ وَلَّوْا عَلٰٓى اَدْبَارِهِمْ
نُفُوْرًا ﴿٤٦﴾ نَحْنُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُوْنَ بِهٖٓ اِذْ يَسْتَمِعُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ وَاِذْ هُمْ
نَجْوٰٓى اِذْ يَقُوْلُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ اِنْ تَتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُوْرًا ﴿٤٧﴾ اُنْظُرْ
كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوْا لَكَ الْاَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوْا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٤٨﴾

And when you recite the Qur'ān, We place an invisible curtain between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter. [45] **And We put covers on their hearts, so that they do not understand it, and deafness in their ears. And when you refer to your Lord alone in the Qur'ān, they turn their backs in aversion.** [46]

We are fully aware of what they listen for, when they lis-

ten to you, and when they are in secret consultation: when the transgressors say, "you are following none but a bewitched man." [47]

See how they have coined similes for you, so they have gone astray and cannot find a way. [48]

Commentary

Can Magic affect a Prophet?

A prophet being affected by magic is as possible as being affected by sickness. Therefore, blessed prophets are not devoid of or detached from human characteristics. For instance, they could be wounded, run temperature or feel pain. Similarly, they could also be affected by magic because, that too, is triggered by the influence of physical causes, such as those of the Jinn. And it also stands proved from Ḥadīth that there was an occasion when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was affected by magic. As for the disbelievers calling him 'bewitched' (*'masḥūr'*) in verse 47 which the Qur'ān has refuted for the reason that they really meant to call him 'insane.' (Bayān al-Qur'ān) Therefore, the Ḥadīth of magic is not contradictory.[1]

The subject taken up in the first two verses (45, 46) has a particular event as a background. According to al-Qurṭubī reporting on the authority of Sayyidnā Sa'id ibn Jubayr ؓ, when Sūrah al-Masad/al-Lahab (111) beginning with: تَبَّتْ يَدَآ أَبِى لَهَبٍ was revealed in the Qur'ān, it also condemned the wife of Abū Lahab. She went to the place where the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to sit with his Companions. At that time, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ was present there. Noticing her coming well ahead of her arrival, he said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "if you move away from here, it will be better. This woman has a sharp tongue. She will say things which may cause you pain." He said, "no, Allah Ta'ālā will put a curtain between me and her." So, she reached there but when she could not see the Holy Prophet ﷺ anywhere around, she turned towards Sayyidnā

1. Moreover, the magic or sorcery can affect a prophet only to cause a physical illness. It can never have an adverse effect on performing their functions as prophets. The disbelievers used to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ 'bewitched person' in this later sense which was totally impossible in his case, while the ḥadīth refers to the physical illness suffered by the Holy Prophet ﷺ which was caused by an act of magic. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Abū Bakr ؓ and said, "your companion has satirized us in poetry." Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said, "By Allah, he is no composer of poetry, much less that of the kind in which people are satirized (*hajw*)." Thereupon, she left in a huff saying, "you are no more than a verifier for him." After she was gone, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ submitted, "didn't she see you?" He said, "as long as she was here, an angel kept obstructing the view between me and her."

A Qur'ānic formula of remaining hidden from enemy sight

'On occasions when the Holy Prophet ﷺ wished to remain hidden from the sight of the Mushriks,' says Sayyidnā Ka'b ؓ, 'he would recite three verses of the Holy Qur'ān. Such was its effect that the disbelievers were unable to see him.' Those three verses are:

1. إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا (Surely, We have put covers on their hearts, so that they do not understand it, and deafness in their ears - Sūrah al-Kahf, 18:57).
2. أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ (Those are the ones Allah has put a seal on whose hearts and hearing and vision - Sūrah an-Naḥl, 16:108).
3. أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً (Have you seen the one who has taken his own desire as god while Allah has let him go astray because of knowledge [his or His] and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and placed over his vision a veil - Sūrah al-Jāthiyah, 45:23).

Sayyidnā Ka'b ؓ says that he related this thing about the Holy Prophet ﷺ to a Syrian who had to go to adjoining Byzantium on a certain business. He went there and stayed for a long time until the local disbelievers started harassing him. When he escaped from there, they pursued him. At that time, he remembered that narrative and recited the three verses identified there. It so happened as if a screen was placed on their eyes why they could not see this person who was walking on the same pathway the enemies were passing by.

Imām Tha'labī says that he related this narrative of Sayyidnā Ka'b ؓ to a resident of the town of R'ay. It so happened that he was put under arrest by the disbelievers of Dailam. For some time he remained under detention with them. One day he got his chance to escape. They

pursued him, but this person also recited those three verses. The effect was immediate. Allah Taʿālā screened their eyes in a manner that they were unable to see him - though, they were walking side by side with their clothes touching his clothes.

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that the verses from Sūrah Yā Sīn which were recited by the Holy Prophet ﷺ at the time of Hijrah may also be added to the three versed cited above. This was when the Mushsriks of Makkah had besieged his house. He recited those verses and went right through them. In fact, he went by throwing dust on their heads and none of them knew anything about it. Those verses of Sūrah Yā Sīn are:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

يٰسٓ ﴿١﴾ وَالْقُرْاٰنِ الْحَكِيْمِ ﴿٢﴾ اِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿٤﴾ تَنْزِيْلَ الْعَزِيْزِ الرَّحِيْمِ ﴿٥﴾ لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّآ اُنْذِرَ اٰبَآؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلٰٓى اَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِيْٓ اَعْنَاقِهِمْ اَغْلٰلًا فَهِيَ اِلَى الْاَذْقَانِ فَهُمْ مُّقْمَحُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْۢ بَيْنِ اَيْدِيْهِمْ سَدًّا وَّمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَاَغْشَيْنٰهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

> Yā Sīn. By the wise Qur'ān, surely you [O Muhammad] are from among the messengers, on a straight path. [This is] a revelation of the Mighty, the Very Merciful, that you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so they are unaware. The word has already taken effect against most of them, so they do not believe. Surely, We have placed shackles on their necks reaching down to their chins, so they are with heads forced high up. And We have placed before them an obstruction and behind them an obstruction and covered them, so they do not see - Sūrah Yā Sīn, 36: 1-9)

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that he himself went through an incident in the Manthūr Castle of al-Qarṭubah in his own country of al-Andalūs (Spain). I ran in front of the enemy and sat in a corner. The enemy sent two horsemen after me. I was on open grounds. There was nothing to obstruct the view between us. But, I was reciting these verses of Sūrah Yā Sīn. Both these horsemen passed by me. Then they went back towards where they had come from, saying, 'this person must be some devil,' be-

cause they could not see me. Allah Ta'ālā had turned them blind as far as I was concerned. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 49 - 52

وَقَالُوٓا ءَاِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَّرُفَاتًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ خَلْقًا جَدِيْدًا ﴿٤٩﴾ قُلْ
كُوْنُوْا حِجَارَةً اَوْ حَدِيْدًا ﴿٥٠﴾ اَوْ خَلْقًا مِّمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ ج
فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَنْ يُّعِيْدُنَا ط قُلِ الَّذِيْ فَطَرَكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ج فَسَيُنْغِضُوْنَ
اِلَيْكَ رُءُوْسَهُمْ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هُوَ ط قُلْ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ قَرِيْبًا ﴿٥١﴾
يَوْمَ يَدْعُوْكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيْبُوْنَ بِحَمْدِهٖ وَتَظُنُّوْنَ اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٥٢﴾ ع

And they say, "Once we are reduced to bones and dust, is it then that we shall be raised, created anew?" [49] **Say, "Be you stones or iron** [50] **or any creation you deem harder in your hearts." Thereupon they will ask, "Who will bring us back?" Say, "The One who created you the first time." So, they will shake their heads before you and say, "When shall that be?" Say, "May be, it is near."** [51] **(It will be) on a day when He will call you, and you will respond praising Him and you will think you did not stay (on the earth) but for a short while.** [52]

Commentary

The word: يَدْعُوْكُمْ (He will call you) in: يَوْمَ يَدْعُوْكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيْبُوْنَ بِحَمْدِهٖ (on a day when He will call you, and you will respond praising Him - 52) is a derivation from: دُعَاء (*du'ā'*) which means to call out for someone by announcing it vocally. The sense is that the day when Allah Ta'ālā will call everyone to come to the plains of Resurrection, this calling will be through Angel Isrāfīl. When he sounds the second trumpet, the dead will come alive and assemble on the plains of Resurrection. It is also possible that, once alive, a call goes through to all of them to assemble there. (Qurṭubī)

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, you will be called out with your name and the name of your father, therefore, give yourself good names (avoiding the absurd ones)." (Qurṭubī)

Even disbelievers will rise praising Allah on the day of Resurrection

The word: إستجابة (*istijābah*) in: فتستجيبون بحمده (and you will respond praising Him - 52) means to respond on being called by someone and be present before him. The sense is 'when you will be called to present yourselves on the plains of Resurrection, all of you will obey that call and assemble there. The word: بحمده (*biḥamdihī*: praising Him) is the state of the nominative pronoun in: تستجيبون (*tastajībūn*: you will respond) which releases the sense of *ḥāmidīn* (حامدين) that is, those praising Him. Thus, the outcome is that all of them will present themselves praising Allah while coming to those fateful plains.

As outwardly obvious, the verse does seem to indicate that this will be the state of all, believers or disbelievers - they both will rise praising Allah. But, the real addressees here are the disbelievers. It is about them that it is being said they all will rise praising Allah. From among Tafsīr authorities, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رحمه الله has said that the disbelievers too will rise from their graves saying: سبحانك وبحمدك (Pure are You and to You belong all praises), but their act of praising at that hour will be of no use to them. (Qurṭubī) The reason is not far to see. When these people see life after death, the words of praise for Allah will escape their mouth involuntarily. This will be no deed deserving recompense.

Some commentators have said that this state has been particularized with believers. They argue that, regarding the disbelievers, the Qur'ān has only this to say: (1) When they rise, they will say, 'يويلنا من بعثنا من مرقدنا' (Woe be to us! Who made us rise from our resting-place? - Sūrah Yā Sīn, 36:52). (2) And according to another verse, they will say, 'يحسرتى على ما فرطت في جنب الله' (O my remorse [is boundless] over what I have neglected on the side of [obedience to] Allah! - Sūrah az-Zumar, 39:56).

But, the truth of the matter is that there is no likelihood of a contradiction between these two sayings. May be, in the beginning, all rise praising. Later, when disbelievers are separated from believers as said in Sūrah Yā Sīn: وامتازوا اليوم أيها المجرمون (But today, O criminals, you stand out distinctly apart - 36:59), they will also say what appears in the cited

verses. Then, it stands proved from many explications of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah that stations of Resurrection will be different with a corresponding difference in the states and conditions of people in each of these. Imām al-Qurṭubī has said that rising in Resurrection will begin with the praise of Allah with everyone doing it when rising and on it will end all matters. This is as it was already said: وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَقِيْلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (And matters between them have been settled in accordance with the truth and it was said: All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds - az-Zumar, 39:75)

Verses 53 - 55

وَقُلْ لِّعِبَادِيْ يَقُوْلُوا الَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ ۗ اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ يَنْزَغُ بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ اِنَّ
الشَّيْطٰنَ كَانَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿٥٣﴾ رَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ ۗ اِنْ يَّشَاْ
يَرْحَمْكُمْ اَوْ اِنْ يَّشَاْ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ ۗ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٥٤﴾
وَرَبُّكَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيّٖنَ
عَلٰى بَعْضٍ وَّاٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ زَبُوْرًا ﴿٥٥﴾

And tell My servants that they should speak that which is best. Surely, Satan creates discord among them. Indeed, Satan is an open enemy to mankind. [53]

Your Lord knows you best. If He so wills, He will have mercy on you and if He so wills, He will punish you. And We have not sent you to be responsible for them. [54]

And your Lord knows best about all those in the heavens and the earth. And We have certainly granted excellence to some prophets over the others. And We gave Dāwūd the Zabūr (the Psalms). [55]

Commentary

Using foul or harsh language is not correct, even against infidels

The first verse (53) prohibits Muslims from talking harshly to disbelievers. It means that a hard line should not be taken unnecessarily, and should there be the need, even killing would be in order - as succinctly

put in two lines of Persian poetry:

کہ بے حکم شرع آب خوردن خطاست   وگر خون بفتویٰ بریزی رواست

Whereas, without an injunction of the Sharī'ah, to drink water is a sin,

In another case, to shed blood under Fatwā is permissible!

Since it is possible to suppress the aggressive might of disbelievers and their hostility to Islām through fighting and killing (as an inevitable measure of defense), therefore, it is allowed. However, by using foul language and harsh words, neither a castle stands conquered nor anyone guided right, therefore, it has been prohibited. Imām al-Qurṭubī said that this verse was revealed in the background of an event relating to Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ. It so happened that someone used foul language against Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ who retaliated harshly and wanted to kill him. This posed the danger of a war breaking out between their two tribes. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

And according to the interpretation of Imām al-Qurṭubī, this verse contains a guideline for Muslims as to how they should address each other. It suggests that they should not speak harshly at the time of mutual difference, for this is a trap door through which the Shaiṭān pushes them into mutual infighting and disorder.

That Zabūr (the Psalms) has been mentioned particularly in the last sentence of verse 55: وَاٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ زَبُوْرًا (And We gave Dāwūd the Zabūr) has been done, perhaps, because Zabūr reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ will be a ruler along with being a messenger and prophet. This is as it appears in the Qur'ān: وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِى الزَّبُوْرِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ اَنَّ الْاَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِىَ الصّٰلِحُوْنَ (And We have already written in the Zabūr, after the [previous] mention, that the land is inherited by My righteous servants - al-Anbiyā', 21:105).

At this stage, Imām al-Baghawī says in his Tafsīr that Zabūr is a book of Allah revealed to Sayyidnā Dāwūd ﷺ. It has one hundred and fifty *sūrahs* or chapters and all *sūrahs* are restricted to praises of Allah and prayers to Him. The areas of lawful and unlawful, obligations and limits have not been taken up there.

Verses 56 - 58

قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهٖ فَلَا يَمْلِكُوْنَ كَشْفَ الضُّرِّ عَنْكُمْ
وَلَا تَحْوِيْلًا ﴿٥٦﴾ أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيْلَةَ
اَيُّهُمْ اَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُوْنَ رَحْمَتَهٗ وَيَخَافُوْنَ عَذَابَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ
كَانَ مَحْذُوْرًا ﴿٥٧﴾ وَاِنْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اِلَّا نَحْنُ مُهْلِكُوْهَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ
اَوْ مُعَذِّبُوْهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا ؕ كَانَ ذٰلِكَ فِى الْكِتٰبِ مَسْطُوْرًا ﴿٥٨﴾

Say, "Call those whom you assume (to be gods), besides Him, while they have no power to remove distress from you nor to shift it." [56]

And those whom they invoke, do themselves seek the means of closeness to their Lord as to which of them is the closest, and they hope for His Mercy and fear His punishment. Indeed, the punishment of your Lord is to be feared. [57]

And there is no town but We are to destroy it before the Doomsday or punish it with severe punishment. That is what stands written in the Book. [58]

Commentary

The word *'al-wasīlah'* in: يَبْتَغُوْنَ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيْلَةَ (seek the means of closeness to their Lord - 57) conveys the sense of that which is used as a means of reaching someone. As for reaching Allah, the *wasīlah* or means is to always keep the pleasure of Allah in sight when learning or doing anything while adhering to the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* strictly. Thus, the sense of the sentence is that all of them are seeking the closeness of Allah Ta'ālā through their righteous deeds.

About the sentence which follows immediately after: يَرْجُوْنَ رَحْمَتَهٗ وَيَخَافُوْنَ عَذَابَهٗ (hope for His Mercy and fear His punishment - 57), Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh said: Hope and Fear, that is, hoping for mercy from Allah as well as fearing Him are two different states one is in. When they stay at par, one keeps on course, correct and stable. And if any one of the two overcomes the other, one finds the equilibrium of his spiritual state subjected to disorder to the measure of that imbalance. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 59 - 60

وَمَا مَنَعَنَآ اَنۡ نُّرۡسِلَ بِالۡاٰيٰتِ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ كَذَّبَ بِهَا الۡاَوَّلُوۡنَ ؕ وَ اٰتَيۡنَا ثَمُوۡدَ النَّاقَةَ مُبۡصِرَةً فَظَلَمُوۡا بِهَا ؕ وَمَا نُرۡسِلُ بِالۡاٰيٰتِ اِلَّا تَخۡوِيۡفًا ﴿۵۹﴾ وَاِذۡ قُلۡنَا لَكَ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ اَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ ؕ وَمَا جَعَلۡنَا الرُّءۡيَا الَّتِىۡۤ اَرَيۡنٰكَ اِلَّا فِتۡنَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَالشَّجَرَةَ الۡمَلۡعُوۡنَةَ فِى الۡقُرۡاٰنِ ؕ وَنُخَوِّفُهُمۡ ۙ فَمَا يَزِيۡدُهُمۡ اِلَّا طُغۡيَانًا كَبِيۡرًا ﴿۶۰﴾

And nothing made us refrain from sending the signs except that the earlier people had belied them. And We gave Thamūd the she-camel, an eye-opener, then they did wrong to her. And We do not send signs but to warn. [59]

And (remember) when We said to you that your Lord encompasses all humans. And We did not make the scene but We showed to you a test for the people - and the tree cursed in the Qur'ān also. And We warn them, yet it adds to nothing but their enormous rebellion. [60]

Commentary

The word *'fitnah'* (فتنه) appearing in verse 60: وَمَا جَعَلۡنَا الرُّءۡيَا الَّتِىۡۤ اَرَيۡنٰكَ اِلَّا فِتۡنَةً لِّلنَّاسِ (And We showed you the scene [in the Night of Ascent - al-Mi'rāj] only to make it a test for the people) is used in the Arabic language to convey many different meanings. It could mean falling into error and going astray, or trial or test or some disorder or upheaval as well. At this place, the probability of all these meanings exists. Early Tafsīr authorities - Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, Ḥasan, Mujāhid and others - have taken *'fitnah'* as carrying the last sense given above. They have said that this *'fitnah'* was that of apostacy (*Irtidād*) which relates to the time when the Holy Prophet ﷺ told people about Mi'rāj, how he went on his nocturnal journey to Baitul-Maqdis, to the heavens from there and his return to Makkah al-Mukarramah before dawn. There were many neo-Muslims who had yet to become staunch in their faith fell into the error of belying his statement and turned apostates. (Qurṭubī)

It also stands proved from this event that the word 'رُءۡيَا' (*ru'ya*) is though also used in the Arabic language in the sense of dream but, at

this place, what is being recounted is no matter of some dream. Had that been the case, there was no reason why people would become apostates. Dreams are dreams. Everyone can see such dreams. In fact, the purpose of employing the word: رُءْيَا (*ru'ya*) at this place is to show that the marvel was witnessed while awake. While commenting on this verse, some commentators have interpreted it to be referring to other events too besides the event of Mi'rāj. But, they do not apply here as a whole. Therefore, the majority of commentators have declared the event of Mi'rāj alone as the relevant subject of this verse. (As described in detail by al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 61- 65

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ط قَالَ ءَاَسْجُدُ
لِمَنْ خَلَقْتَ طِيْنًا ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ اَرَءَيْتَكَ هٰذَا الَّذِيْ كَرَّمْتَ عَلَيَّ لَئِنْ
اَخَّرْتَنِ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَاَحْتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهٗٓ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ اذْهَبْ
فَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَاِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَآؤُكُمْ جَزَآءً مَّوْفُوْرًا ﴿٦٣﴾
وَاسْتَفْزِزْ مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ وَاَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِمْ بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ
وَشَارِكْهُمْ فِي الْاَمْوَالِ وَالْاَوْلَادِ وَعِدْهُمْ ط وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اِلَّا
غُرُوْرًا ﴿٦٤﴾ اِنَّ عِبَادِيْ لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطٰنٌ ط وَكَفٰى بِرَبِّكَ
وَكِيْلًا ﴿٦٥﴾

And (remember) when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Ādam." So, they prostrated, except Iblīs (Satan). He said, "Shall I prostrate before the one You have created from mud?" [61] **He added, "Tell me, this one whom You have honoured above me; if You give me respite till the Doomsday, I shall subdue his progeny, except a few of them."** [62] **He (Allah) said, " Go then, for whoever of them follows you, the Hell shall be the recompense of you all - a full recompense.** [63] **And entice with your voice those of them you can, and rally against them your horsemen and your footmen, and share with them in their wealth and their children, and make promises to them" - and Satan promises them nothing but delusion -**

[64] **"As for My servants, you have no control over them. And your Lord is enough to look after (everything)."** [65]

Commentary

The word: لَأَحْتَنِكَنَّ (subdue) in verse 62 is from: إِحْتِنَاك (*ihtināk*) which means to exterminate or uproot something, or to subdue and overpower it completely. (Qurṭubī) The word: وَاسْتَفْزِزْ (and entice) in verse 64 is from إِسْتِفْزَاز (*istifzāz*) which basically means to cut off or to tear away from and at this place it means to tear away from the path of truth. This is followed by صَوْتَ (with your voice). Ṣawt (صَوْت), the Arabic word for voice is well known. What is the voice of Satan? Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās says: The voices of songs, musical instruments and the hullabaloo of fun and games are the voices of Satan that he employs to tear people away from the path of truth. (Qurṭubī) This tells us that (singing or listening to) music and (playing or listening to) musical instruments are prohibited. (Qurṭubī)

While refusing to prostrate before Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام, Iblīs (the Satan) had said two things:

(1) That 'Ādam was created from mud and he was from fire and that there was no reason why mud was given precedence over fire. This question was an effort to find out the wisdom of the order given to him before he could comply with the Divine command - something the one so commanded has no right to ask. That Allah, the Exalted, would let the commanded one have the right to demand the wisdom of His command is far out specially when we see in our everyday life that human beings themselves would not give their servant the right to say no to them. Think of a master asking his servants to do something and the servant demanding the master that he should first explain the wisdom of that assignment. Therefore, this question was considered unworthy of an answer and no answer was given. In addition to that, the answer is already obvious. Giving precedence to something over the other is the prerogative of the Being that created and nurtured everyone. Whenever and whatever He declares to be superior becomes exactly so.

(2) Secondly, he had said if he was given respite till the day of Qiyāmah, he will mislead the entire progeny of 'Ādam, except a few of them. That Allah Ta'ālā has elected to answer in the later verses. He

said that the Satan will have no control over His sincere servants even if he were to rally his entire forces against them and as for the insincere who fall into his trap, they will meet the same fate as his, all consigned to Hell. When this verse (64) mentions the horsemen and footmen of the Satanic army, it does not necessarily mean that the Satan actually has combat support in that formation. In fact, this is a manner of referring to the full force and power of the Satan. And if the Satan does have horsemen and footmen actually, even that too cannot be denied. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said: Those who come out in support of disbelief and sin, horsemen or footmen, they are nothing but the army of the Satan. Now remains the question as to how the Satan came to know that he would succeed in enticing and misleading the progeny of 'Ādam, the basis on which he claimed that he will subdue them. There are two possibilities. Perhaps, by looking at the ingredients that went into the making of man, he had gathered that man would be desire-prone and it would not be difficult to entice him successfully. And then, it is also not far out to believe that his very claim was nothing but a bland lie.

As for the sense of: وَشَارِكْهُمْ فِى الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ (and share with them in their wealth and their children - 64), Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said: Wealth and property acquired by false, impermissible and unlawful means or spent on what is *ḥarām* is the sharing of the Satan in it. As for the sharing of the Satan in children, it could either be through illegitimacy, or by naming them like disbelievers and polytheists , or by indulging in polytheistic customs to ensure their security, or by taking to *ḥarām* sources of income to bring them up. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 66 - 70

رَبُّكُمُ الَّذِىْ يُزْجِىْ لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ فِى الْبَحْرِ لِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ
كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيْمًا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَاِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِى الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ تَدْعُوْنَ
اِلَّاۤ اِيَّاهُ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَجّٰىكُمْ اِلَى الْبَرِّ اَعْرَضْتُمْ ؕ وَكَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ كَفُوْرًا ﴿٦٧﴾
اَفَاَمِنْتُمْ اَنْ يَّخْسِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ اَوْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ

لَاتَجِدُوْا لَكُمْ وَكِيْلًا ﴿٦٨﴾ اَمْ اَمِنْتُمْ اَنْ يُّعِيْدَكُمْ فِيْهِ تَارَةً اُخْرٰى
فَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاصِفًا مِّنَ الرِّيْحِ فَيُغْرِقَكُمْ بِمَا كَفَرْتُمْ لا ثُمَّ لَاتَجِدُوْا
لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا بِهٖ تَبِيْعًا ﴿٦٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ وَحَمَلْنٰهُمْ فِى
الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنٰهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَفَضَّلْنٰهُمْ عَلٰى كَثِيْرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا
تَفْضِيْلًا ﴿٧٠﴾ ع

Your Lord is the One who causes ships to sail for you through the sea, so that you may go in quest of His bounty; surely, He is Ever Merciful for you. [66]

And when you face a hardship at sea, forgotten are those whom you used to invoke, except Him (Allah). Then, once He brings you safe to the land, you turn away (from Him). And man is so ungrateful. [67] **Do you, then, feel secure from that He makes a part of the land sink down along with you, or that He sends down a rain of stones on you, whereupon you will find no one to protect you?** [68] **Or, do you feel secure from that He takes you back to it (the sea) once again, and sends a heavy storm of wind upon you which drowns you for your disbelief, whereupon you will find no one to pursue your case against Us?** [69]

And We bestowed dignity on the children of 'Ādam and provided them with rides on the land and in the sea, and provided them with a variety of good things and made them much superior to many of those We created. [70]

Commentary

Why are the children of 'Ādam superior?

The last of the verses cited above mentions the superiority of the children of 'Adam over most of the Divine creation. Here, we have to consider two things: (1) What are the attributes and reasons of this superiority? (2) What is the sense of the statement in the verse: 'made them much superior to many of those We created'?

(1) The first question can be answered in detail by saying that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed the children of 'Ādam with such multi-dimensional attributes as are not found in many of those He has created. The beauty of

form and features, the balance of body, the balance of temperament and the balance of height and built are good examples. These attributes bestowed on human beings are not found in other living forms in that balanced measure. In addition to that, they have been endowed with distinct reason and intelligence through which they get things done up and down in the universe of their experience. Allah Ta'ālā has given them the built-in capability to compound and manufacture, from out of what has been Divinely created, materials and things which serve them in living, moving, eating and wearing in all sorts of ways.

No less is their gift of communication, speech, comprehension, understanding and explanation. This remains unmatched by other living forms. Using signs and symbols to communicate what lies in one's heart and telling others what one thinks and feels through letters and writings are all manifestations of the signal human distinction. Some scholars have said that eating with the fingers of the hand is also a particular human attribute. Other than man, all animals eat with their mouth. The practice of compounding edibles with different things in order to make these delicious and beneficial is the way of human beings alone. Animals eat things that are single and simple. Some would eat raw meat, others would go by grass or some fruit. However, they all eat simples. It is man alone who prepares food through compounding all sorts of solids, liquids, spices and herbs (which has, in our day, assumed the status of the highly publicized art of cuisine). Then, there is the most pronounced superiority of reason and intelligence through which human beings are supposed to recognize their Creator and Master, find out what He likes and dislikes and do what He likes and avoid what He dislikes. Thus, in terms of reason and intelligence, the created have three kinds. Common animals have desires but no reason and intelligence (as we understand it). The angels have reason and intelligence, but do not have desires. Human beings have both. They have reason and intelligence as well as desires. This is the reason why, when he suppresses his desires through reason and intelligence and succeeds in saving himself from indulging in things disliked by Allah Ta'ālā, he reaches a station which is even higher than that of many angels.

(2) We can now turn to the sense of the statement that the children of 'Ādam were made much superior than many of those Allah created. As

for the superiority of the children of 'Ādam over all created forms in the world, higher and lower, and all animals, it cannot be disputed by anyone. Similarly, the Jinn are like human beings in terms of reason and intelligence. That human beings are superior to them as well is accepted by all. What remains now is the case of angels. Who is superior, man or angel? What can be authentically said about it is that common righteous believers among human beings, such as the men of Allah, are superior to angels in general. But, special angels, such as Jibra'īl and Mikā'īl and others, are superior to the common righteous believers while special believers, such as the blessed prophets عليهم السلام, are superior even to special angels. As far as disbelievers and sinners among human beings are concerned, they just cannot be compared with angels. In fact, they are not even superior to animals in terms of the real purpose of life, that of seeking success through righteousness. About them, the Holy Qur'ān has already given its verdict: أُولٰٓئِكَ كَالْاَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ اَضَلُّ (They are like cattle. Rather, they are much more misled - 7:179) (Tafsīr Maẓharī). Allah knows best.

Verses 71 - 72

يَوْمَ نَدْعُوْا كُلَّ اُنَاسٍۢ بِاِمَامِهِمْ ۚ فَمَنْ اُوْتِیَ كِتٰبَهٗ بِيَمِيْنِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ
يَقْرَءُوْنَ كِتٰبَهُمْ وَلَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ فَتِيْلًا ﴿٧١﴾ وَمَنْ كَانَ فِیْ هٰذِهٖٓ اَعْمٰی
فَهُوَ فِی الْاٰخِرَةِ اَعْمٰی وَاَضَلُّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿٧٢﴾

(Think of) the Day We will call every people with their books of deeds. So, whoever is given his book in his right hand, then, such people will read their book and they shall not be wronged even a bit. [71]

And whoever is blind in this (world) will be blind in the Hereafter and far more astray from the path. [72]

Commentary

The word: اِمَام (Imām) in the first sentence of verse 71: يَوْمَ نَدْعُوْا كُلَّ اُنَاسٍۢ بِاِمَامِهِمْ translated as '(Think of) the Day We will call every people with their book of deeds' appears here in the sense of 'book' as in Sūrah Yā Sīn: وَكُلَّ شَیْءٍ اَحْصَيْنٰهُ فِیْٓ اِمَامٍ مُّبِيْنٍ (and We have enumerated everything in a clear book - 36:12). Here, اِمَامٍ مُّبِيْنٍ means a clear book. Then, *'kitāb'* is called *'imām'* for the reason that, in the event of some error or difference, one

turns to the book very much like turning to a religious leader who is followed. (Qurṭubī)

And it also appears from a Ḥadīth of Tirmidhī as narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ (Tirmidhī calls it Ḥasan Gharīb) that, *'imām'* in this verse means *'kitāb.'* The words of the Ḥadīth are given below:

يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ قَالَ يُدْعٰى اَحَدُهُمْ فَيُعْطٰى كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِيْنِهٖ

Explaining the verse يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ (71), the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself said: One of them will be called and his book of deeds will be given in his right hand. (From a lengthy Ḥadīth)

It also stands established from this Ḥadīth that *'imām'* has been used here in the sense of 'book', and that *'kitāb'* signifies the 'book of deeds.' (Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has, therefore, translated *'imām'* as the 'book of deeds')

Also reported from some commentators, including Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā ﷺ and Mujāhid, is the meaning of *'imām'* as religious leader. It means that everyone is to be called as the follower of a certain leader - whether they be blessed prophets or their deputies, the Shaykhs and the 'Ulamā', or leaders who have been inviting people to error and sin. (Qurṭubī)

Given this meaning, the sense of the verse would be that everyone will be called by the name of his or her leader and all those so called will be assembled at one place. For example, there will be the followers of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, the followers of Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā 'Isā عليهما السلام and the followers of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. Then, possibly the names of those will also be called out who are their direct instructors or leaders (such as 'Ulamā' and religious guides).

The Book of Deeds

As it appears from several verses of the Holy Qur'ān, only disbelievers will be given the book of deeds in the left hand. This is as it is said in the verse: إِنَّهُ كَانَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ الْعَظِيْمِ (Indeed, he was not used to believing in Allah, the Great - al-Ḥāqqah, 69:33) and also in another verse: إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَنْ لَّنْ يَّحُوْرَ (Indeed, he surmised that he would never return - al-Inshiqāq, 84:14). In the first verse quoted above, faith has been negated explicitly while the second carries a denial of the Hereafter - which too is disbelief after all.

This comparative look tells us that those who shall get their book of deeds in the right hand will be the people of faith, pious or sinner. The believer will read his or her book of deeds in delight. In fact, the happy believer will have others read it too. This happiness will be because of having one's 'Īmān (faith) intact and because of deliverance from eternal punishment - though, punishment may also come for some deeds.

How the book of deeds will be given in the right or the left hand is something not mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. But, the expression: تَطَايُرُ الْكُتُبِ (causing the books fly) has appeared in some Aḥādīth (reported by Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ). And in some narrations of Ḥadīth, it appears that all books of deeds will be there at one place under the 'Arsh (Throne). Then a wind will blow and cause these to fly and reach the hands of people in a manner that some will get it in their right hand and some others in the left. (Reported by al-'Uqailī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ) (Bayān al-Qur'ān from Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Verses 73 - 77

وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَفْتِنُونَكَ عَنِ الَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ لِتَفْتَرِيَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَهُ
وَإِذًا لَّاتَّخَذُوكَ خَلِيلًا ﴿٧٣﴾ وَلَوْلَا أَنْ ثَبَّتْنَاكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَّ تَرْكَنُ
إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٤﴾ إِذًا لَّأَذَقْنَاكَ ضِعْفَ الْحَيٰوةِ وَضِعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ
ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ عَلَيْنَا نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾ وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفِزُّونَكَ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ
لِيُخْرِجُوكَ مِنْهَا وَإِذًا لَّا يَلْبَثُونَ خِلٰفَكَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٦﴾ سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ
أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُّسُلِنَا وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾

And surely, they were about to tempt you away from what We have revealed to you, so that you forge something else in Our name, and in that case they would have certainly made you a friend. [73]

And had We not made you firm, it was likely that you would have inclined towards them a little. [74]

In that case, We would have surely made you taste a double (punishment) in life and a double (punishment) after

death, then you would not have found anyone to help you against Us. [75]

And they were likely to harass you in the land, so that they could expel you from there. And in that case, they would have not lived (there) after you, but a little. [76] **Such has been Our way with the messengers We sent before you. And you will find no reversal in Our way.** [77]

Commentary

Out of the verses appearing above, the first three relate to a particular event. To determine it precisely, Tafsīr Maẓharī carries some relevant reports. The event which is closer and more supportive in terms of the indicators set in the Qur'ān is what has been reported by Ibn Abī Ḥātim as based on a narrative of Sayyidnā Jubayr ibn Nufayr ﷺ. According to this report, some chiefs of the Quraysh of Makkah came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said: 'If you have been really sent to us, you should remove these poor and broken down people from around you, for sitting with such people is a matter of insult for us. If you do that, we too will become your companions and friends.' When they said this, the Holy Prophet ﷺ somewhat leaned towards the idea that he might do something like that as suggested by them in the hope that they may, perhaps, become Muslims. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

Through this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sounded that their suggestion was a *fitnah* and the friendship they were talking about was also a *fitnah* (a trial or test or a ruse to tempt him into creating discord in his ranks). Therefore, he should not accept it. After that, the text says: Had your Lord not been particular about your grooming and fortitude, it was not too far out that you could have come somewhat closer to tilting towards their proposal.

From this verse, says Tafsīr Maẓharī, it is clearly understood that there was just no probability of the Holy Prophet ﷺ ever tilting towards such absurd demands from the Quraysh disbelievers. Yes, coming close to tilting, and that too within a very insignificant limit, was probable. But, by making him *ma'ṣūm* (protected, infallible), Allah Ta'ālā saved him from drifting even to that limit. If we were to think about it, this verse provides a great proof of the highest moral disposition with which all prophets عليهم السلام were blessed. So, had there been even no shield of

prophetic infallibility, still such was the natural disposition of the Prophet of Islam that tilting towards the absurd proposal of disbelievers would have never been possible for him. However, there did exist the probability of his coming somewhat closer, in an insignificant measure, towards the act of tilting - something terminated by the prophetic infallibility.

After that, it was said: إِذًا لَّأَذَقْنَٰكَ ضِعْفَ الْحَيٰوةِ وَضِعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ It means: Supposing the impossible, if you would have come closer to tilting towards their wrong move, your punishment would have been double in life and double after death (in the grave or the Hereafter, because even an insignificant error made by those close to Allah is considered to be very grave). What has been said here is almost the same as was said about the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: يٰنِسَآءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنْ يَّأْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ يُّضٰعَفْ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ (O wives of the Prophet, whoever of you should commit a clear act of immodesty, the punishment for her will be multiplied doubly - 33:30).

Istifzāz in: وَإِنْ كَادُوْا لَيَسْتَفِزُّوْنَكَ (And they were likely to harass you - 76) literally means to cut off, or tear away from, or to provoke into moving from a place. At this place, the sense is to expel the Holy Prophet ﷺ from his station at Makkah or Madīnah. The verse means: Had they done that, their punishment would have been that they themselves would have not been able to live there much longer after you. This is the description of another event. There are two reports about it. One event relates to Madīnah al-Ṭayyibah. The Jews of the city came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They told him: 'O Abū al-Qāsim ﷺ, if you are true in your claim to be a prophet, you should go and live in Syria because the land of Syria is the land of al-Maḥshar (the Resurrection) and the land of prophets too.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ was somewhat impressed by what they said and when he traveled to Syria at the time of the battle of Tabūk, the idea of taking up residence in Syria was still on his mind. But, the revelation of the verse: وَإِنْ كَادُوْا لَيَسْتَفِزُّوْنَكَ (And they were likely to harass you - 76) at that time stopped him from doing so. After presenting this report, Ibn Kathīr has, however, declared it to be unsatisfactory.

As an alternate, he points out to another event which transpired in Makkah al-Mukarramah and which, according to him, is the point of reference in this verse for the fact that this Sūrah was Makkī provided a strong coherence for it. As the event goes, once the Quraysh disbelievers

intended to expel the Holy Prophet ﷺ from Makkah al-Mukarramah. Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā revealed the verse: كَادُوْا لَيَسْتَفِزُّوْنَكَ where the Quraysh disbelievers were warned that in the event they expelled the Holy Prophet ﷺ from Makkah, they too would not be sitting in Makkah in peace any longer. This is the event Ibn Kathīr considers to be the weightier choice as the point of reference in the verse. Then, he goes on to explain that this warning of the Holy Qur'ān was seen come true by the disbelievers of Makkah with their own eyes. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ migrated from Makkah al-Mukarramah, they were unable to sit there in peace even for a day. It was within a period of a year and six months that Allah Ta'ālā made them assemble on the plains of Badr where seventy of their chiefs were killed and their initial aggressive power was broken. Then came the final outcome of the battle of 'Uḥud which made them more awe-stricken, and the last confrontation of the battle of al-Aḥzāb virtually broke their back. It was in the eighth year of Hijrah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ conquered the whole of Makkah al-Mukarramah.

The last verse (77): سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا (Such has been Our way with the messengers We sent ...) tells us that, according to the customary way and law of Allah Ta'ālā, when a people expel their prophet from his homeland, or compel him to leave by scaring and harassing, then, those people too are not left to continue living there. They are visited by the punishment of Allah Ta'ālā.

Verses 78 - 82

اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِدُلُوْكِ الشَّمْسِ اِلٰى غَسَقِ الَّيْلِ وَقُرْاٰنَ الْفَجْرِ ؕ اِنَّ قُرْاٰنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُوْدًا ﴿۷۸﴾ وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهٖ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ ۖ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُوْدًا ﴿۷۹﴾ وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَدْخِلْنِىْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّاَخْرِجْنِىْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَّاجْعَلْ لِّىْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ سُلْطٰنًا نَّصِيْرًا ﴿۸۰﴾ وَقُلْ جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ؕ اِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوْقًا ﴿۸۱﴾ وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَآءٌ وَّرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۙ وَلَا يَزِيْدُ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ اِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴿۸۲﴾

Establish *ṣalāh* between the decline of the sun and the darkness of the night, and the recital at dawn. Surely, the recital at dawn is well attended. [78] **And during the night, wake up for *ṣalāh*, an additional prayer for you. It is very likely that your Lord places you at a Praised Station.** [79]

And say, "O my Lord, make me enter a rightful entrance and make me exit a rightful exit, and grant me from Your Own a power, favoured (by You)." [80] **And say, "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Falsehood is surely bound to vanish."** [81]

And We reveal the Qur'ān which is cure and mercy for the believers. And it adds nothing to the unjust but loss. [82]

Commentary

Ṣalāh is the best defense against enemy hostility

Previous verses have mentioned the hostility of the enemies of Islam, the plans they made to hurt and harass the Holy Prophet ﷺ and what was to be done in response. By giving the Holy Prophet ﷺ the command to establish Ṣalāh in the verses cited above, it is being suggested that it is the best remedy against the mischief made and pain caused by enemies. This is similar to what has been said more clearly in a verse of Sūrah al-Hijr: وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ اَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِّنَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ It means: "And indeed We know that your heart feels distressed for what they say. So, proclaim the purity and glory of your Lord, and be among those who prostrate." (Qurṭubī)

This verse declares devotion to the remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*) through His praises (*ḥamd*) and His glorification (*tasbīḥ*) and Ṣalāh (prayer) as the panacea of pains inflicted by enemies. Dhikr and Ṣalāh are special safety shields against their aggressive designs. Then, it is also not far out to believe that staying safe against the pain inflicted by enemies depends on the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā. So, the best medium of acquiring this help is Ṣalāh as stated in the Holy Qur'ān: وَاسْتَعِيْنُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ (Seek help through patience and prayer - 2:153).

The injunction of five prayers

The majority of leading Tafsīr authorities has declared this verse to be a comprehensive injunction for all five daily prayers. The reason is

that the word: دُلُوک (*dulūk*) is essentially used in the sense of 'decline' and the decline of the Sun begins at the time of meridian - though, it could also be applied to the sunset. But, at this place, the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Tabi'in have taken the word: دُلُوک (*dulūk*) to mean the post-meridian decline of the Sun. (as explained in details by al-Qurṭubī, al-Maẓharī and Ibn Kathīr).

The word: غَسَقٌ (*ghasaq*) in the next phrase: اِلٰى غَسَقِ الَّيْلِ means the darkness of the night when it is complete. Imām Mālik has reported this very Tafsīr of *'ghasaq'* from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ.

Thus, within the statement: لِدُلُوْكِ الشَّمْسِ اِلٰى غَسَقِ الَّيْلِ (between the decline of the Sun and the darkness of the night), four prayers stand covered. These are Ẓuhr, 'Aṣr, Maghrib and 'Ishā'. And also identified there is the time when two of these prayers begin, that is, the time of Zuhr begins from the decline (*zawāl*) of the Sun and the time of 'Ishā' from: غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ (*ghasaq al-layl*) that is, at the time when the darkness of night is complete. Therefore, the great Imām, Abū Ḥanīfah has ruled that the time of 'Ishā' begins from the time when, after the red glow, the white glow of the evening also disappears. Everyone knows that, close to the sunset, a red glow appears on the western horizon and, soon after this redness, there spreads a sort of whiteness on it. Then, this whiteness too disappears. It is obvious that the darkness of the night will be complete only when the whiteness of the horizon also goes away. Therefore, these words support the view of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Other Imāms have ruled that the time of 'Ishā' begins after the disappearance of the red glow on the evening horizon and that this is the Tafsīr of *'ghasaq al-layl'* (the darkness of night).

In the next phrase: وَقُرْاٰنَ الْفَجْرِ (*wa Qur'ān al-fajr*: translated as 'and the recital at dawn'), the word: 'Qur'ān' denotes Ṣalāh at this place because the Qur'ān is an integral part of Ṣalāh. Most Tafsīr authorities - Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī, Maẓharī and others - have adopted this very meaning. Therefore, the sense of the verse is that the words: دُلُوْكِ الشَّمْسِ اِلٰى غَسَقِ الَّيْلِ (between the decline of the Sun and the darkness of the night) carried a description of four prayers. Identified now is the fifth prayer, that of Fajr. It has been described separately which is an indicator of the particular importance and merit of this Ṣalāh.

The word *'mashhūd'* in the expression: كَانَ مَشْهُوْدًا (*kāna mashhūdā*) has been derived from *shahādah* that means 'to be present.' This is a time when, according to clear statements in authentic Aḥādīth, both groups of angels, those of the night and those of the day, present themselves for Ṣalāh. Therefore, it has been called *'mashhūd'* (hence, translated as 'well-attended'). The injunction of five prayers has appeared in this verse briefly. It has been explained fully by the Holy Prophet ﷺ through his word and deed - and unless one acts in accordance with this explanation, no one can perform Ṣalāh. I just do not know how those who claim to understand the Qur'ān without Ḥadīth and the statements of the Rasūl of Allah go about making their Ṣalāh? Similarly, in this verse, the recital of the Qur'ān within the Ṣalāh has also been mentioned briefly. As for its details, it stands proved from the word and deed of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the recitation in the Fajr prayer should be long - to the measure of strength and ability, less than that in Ẓuhr and Jumu'ah, average in 'Aṣr and 'Ishā' and very brief in Maghrib. As for the mention of a long recitation in Maghrib and very brief in Fajr in some reports, it stands practically abandoned. Imām al-Qurṭubī carries the *riwāyah* of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim in which the recitation of long Sūrahs like Sūrah al-A'rāf and Mursalāt in the Ṣalāh of Maghrib, or the recitation of only the Mu'awwadhatain (the last two Sūrahs) as sufficient in the Ṣalāh of Fajr have been reported. He, then, comments: فمتروك بالعمل ولانكاره على معاذ التطويل وبامره الائمة بالتخفيف It means that these incidentals of long recitation in Maghrib and brief in Fajr stand abandoned in the light of the constant practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well as his verbal sayings. (Qurṭubī)

The time of the Ṣalāh of Tahajjud: Injunctions and rulings

The word: تَهَجَّد (*tahajjud*) in: وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهٖ (And during the night, wake up for Ṣalāh - 79) has been derived from هجود :*hujūd*. This word is used for two opposite meanings, that of sleeping and that of waking both. But, the words: وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهٖ, at this place, mean 'be awake with the Qur'ān in a part of the night' because the pronoun in: بِهٖ (*bihī*: with it) reverts back to the Qur'ān. (Maẓharī). 'Being awake with the Qur'ān' means the making of Ṣalāh (with full compliance of what it requires). This very nightly prayer is called the prayer of Tahajjud in the terminology of Sharī'ah. Speaking generally, the sense in which it has been taken is that the prayer said after waking up from a short sleep is the Tahaj-

jud. But, according to Tafsīr Maẓharī, the sense of the verse is no more than sacrificing sleep to make Ṣalāh during some part of the night. This sense holds good for sleeping a little, then waking up from it and making Ṣalāh. Very similarly, it is also good if one begins by postponing sleep for Tahajjud and makes the Ṣalāh. The condition that one has to sleep before doing the prayer of Tahajjud is not found in the words used by the Qur'ān. Apart from this, there are reports from Aḥādīth which support this general sense of Tahajjud.

And the definition of the prayer of Tahajjud reported from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī by Imām Ibn Kathīr also confirms this element of generality. The words of the report are as follows:

قال الحسن البصری هو ما کان بعد العشاء' ویحمل علی ما کان بعد النوم

> Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says: The prayer of Tahajjud holds good for every prayer that is said after al-'Ishā' And, (because of actual practice) it will be applied to that which is said after some sleep. (Ibn Kathīr)

The outcome is that being after sleep is no condition in the real sense of the prayer of Tahajjud - and this condition is not present in the words of the Qur'ān as well. But, speaking generally, it has been the constant practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions ﷺ that they used to do their Tahajjud prayer after waking up in the later part of the night, therefore, this would be the better way of doing it.

Is the prayer of Tahajjud Farḍ (obligatory) or Nafl (additional)?

The words: نفل : *nafl* and نَافِلَة :*nāfilah* in: نَافِلَةً لَّكَ (an additional prayer for you - 79) literally mean 'additional.' Therefore, prayer (Ṣalāh) and charity (*ṣadaqah, khairāt*) etc. that is not obligatory or necessary and, the doing of which brings *thawāb* (reward), and not doing which entails no sin or misconduct, are called *nafl*. In this verse, by looking at the words: نَافِلَةً لَّكَ (an additional prayer for you) with the prayer of Tahajjud, it is summarily understood that the prayer of Tahajjud is particularly associated with the Holy Prophet ﷺ as *nafl* for him. The fact, though, is that its effect as *nafl* is shared by all, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his entire *ummah*. Therefore, some respected early commentators have taken '*nāfilah*' at this place as an attribute of *farīḍah* or duty. The meaning given by them is that the Muslim community at large is obligated with five

daily prayers only, but Tahajjud has also been made an additional obligation on the Holy Prophet ﷺ. So, at this place, the word: نافلة :*nāfilah* appears in the sense of an additional obligation, not in the general sense of *nafl*.

Let us look at the correct investigative position in this matter. When, during the early stage of Islam, Sūrah al-Muzzammil was revealed, that was a time when five prayers had yet to be obligated. What everyone was obligated with was the prayer of Tahajjud. This obligation has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Muzzammil (73). Then, it was in the night of the Mi'rāj (Ascent) that five prayers were made obligatory (*farḍ*). So, as for the obligatory nature of Tahajjud, it was abrogated as a duty on the Muslim community at large, by consensus. However, difference did exist about its obligatory nature. Was it also abrogated in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ? Or, did it remain an obligation on him as a matter of special consideration - and in this verse, the expression: نَافِلَةً لَّكَ (*nāfilatal-lak*) means exactly that 'the prayer of Tahajjud is an additional obligation on you.' But, according to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, this is not correct for many reasons. Firstly, there is no justification for taking *nafl* as *farḍ*. If it is supposed to be figurative speech, then, there will be no reality against it. Secondly, in authentic Aḥādīth, only five fixed prayers have been mentioned as obligatory (*farḍ*). At the end of another Ḥadīth, it has been said that the fifty prayers made obligatory initially in the nocturnal journey of the Mi'rāj were later reduced in number and set at five. Thus, the number was, though, reduced but the reward promised against these was that of no less than fifty. Then it was said: مَا يُبَدَّلُ الْقَوْلُ لَدَىَّ (The word [given to My servants] will not be changed with Me - Qāf, 50:29). It means: When the command was given for fifty, the reward shall be given for no less than fifty, though the number to be actually performed was reduced.

The outcome of these narrative reports is no other but that no Ṣalāh - other than the five prayers - is obligatory (*farḍ*) on the Muslim *ummah* at large and on the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Then, there is a reason for it too. Had the word: نَافِلَة : *nāfilah* been used here in the sense of an 'additional duty,' then, rather than using the word: لَكَ (*lak:* for you) after it, the word used should have been: عَلَيْكَ (*'alaik:* on you) since the latter signifies obligation while the word: لَكَ (*lak:* for you) is used only for approv-

al and permission.

Similarly, this is the position declared to be correct and sound in Tafsīr Maẓharī which says: When the obligatory status of Tahajjud was abrogated in the case of the Muslim *ummah*, it stood abrogated in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well. What remained was *nafl* for everyone. But, this position raises a question: What is the singularity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in it? That it is *nafl* for everyone already stands proved. What, then, would be the outcome of saying: نَافِلَةً لَّكَ (an additional prayer for you)? The answer is that, according to clear statements of Aḥādīth, all kinds of voluntary offerings and *nafl 'Ibādāt* made by the Muslim *ummah* expiate their sins and serve as complements to whatever shortcomings remain in the performance of their obligatory prayers. But, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not only that he is infallible (*ma'sūm*) against sins, he is also above from any shortcomings in the observance of the etiquette of Ṣalāh. Therefore, as far as he is concerned, *nafl 'Ibādāt* are nothing but additional. These cannot make amends for any shortcomings. Instead, these are simply a source of increased nearness to Allah. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

Is the prayer of Tahajjud Nafl or Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah?

As for Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah (the emphasized Sunnah), Muslim jurists have a standing rule. Whatever the Holy Prophet ﷺ has done constantly, never leaving it unless under compulsion, is Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah - except that it is proved on the authority of an Islamic legal argument that the particular act was special to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and was not for the Muslim community in general. This rule will obviously require that the prayer of Tahajjud should also be taken as Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah for everyone and not a mere *nafl*. The reason is that the constancy of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the matter of this Ṣalāh stands proved as an uninterrupted Sunnah. And there is no proof of its being restricted to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, it should be Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah for the Muslim *ummah* at large as well. This is the position Tafsīr Maẓharī rates as preferable, weightier and worthier. In proof of this being 'emphasized' (*al-mu'akkadah*), it has pointed out to the Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said about a person who used to say his Tahajjud prayer earlier but left it later: 'the Satan has soiled his ear.' Such a drastic admonition and warning does not sound in order against the

abandonment of *nafl* only. This tells us that it is Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah (an emphasized Sunnah).

And as for the respected elders who take the position that Tahajjud is only a *nafl,* they declared this perseverance and constancy to be the hallmark of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, what he said as admonition against the abandonment of Tahajjud by the person who used to do it before was not really said against its abandonment by him as such. Instead, it was said against first getting used to it, then abandoning it. The reason is that a person who gets into the habit of doing a certain *nafl* must continue with it assiduously - and there is a consensus of the Muslim *ummah* on it. If one leaves it after being in the habit of doing it, he will be blameworthy because leaving it without excuse after the habit is the sign of certain evasion and reluctance. However, there is no blame on the person who is just not in the habit of doing it from the very beginning. Allah knows best.

The number of Raka'āt in the prayer of Tahajjud

In the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, as narrated by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, 'the Holy Prophet ﷺ would never say more than eleven *raka'āt*, in Ramaḍān or during months other than it.' Out of these eleven, according to the Ḥanafiyyah, three *raka'āt* used to be that of *witr,* the remaining eight being that of Tahajjud.

And in a narration of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the following words of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها have been reported: 'The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to say thirteen *raka'āt* during the night which includes *witr* and two *raka'āt* of the Sunnah of Fajr as well.' (Maẓharī) The Sunnah of Fajr has been counted with the nightly prayer because they are performed in almost the same sequence. These reports tell us that the usual habit of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was to offer eight *raka'āt* in the prayer of Tahajjud.

But, from a report coming from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها herself, it also stands proved that, on occasions, he has done less than that number - four or six - as being sufficient. When Sayyidnā Masrūq رضي الله عنه asked her about the prayer of Tahajjud, she has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī to have said: 'There used to be seven, nine and eleven *raka'āt* - other than the Sunnah of Fajr' (Maẓharī from al-Bukhārī). According to the Ḥanafiyyah, if three *raka'āt* are that of *witr,* four out of

seven, six out of nine and eight out of eleven turn out to be the *rak'āt* of Tahajjud.

In what manner was the prayer of Tahajjud offered?

Narrative reports as they generally appear in Aḥādīth prove that the first two *rak'āt* in the beginning were light with a brief recitation. Then, in the rest of the *rak'āt*, the recitation was long and so were the *rukū'* and *sajdah* - and, at times, this length would become too much and, at others, somewhat less. (This is a summary of the Ḥadīth reports taken from Tafsīr Maẓharī at this place)

The Praised Station

The Holy Prophet ﷺ has been promised مقام محمود (Maqām Maḥmūd: The Praised Station) in this verse and this station is, out of all prophets, particular to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As to its explanation, there are different sayings. But, the most sound of them is what appears in authentic Aḥādīth in the words of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. This Station is the station of the Grand Intercession (*al-shafā'ah al-kubrā*). This will come to pass on the plains of Resurrection (*al-Ḥashr*) when all children of 'Ādam will be there requesting every prophet and messenger of Allah to intercede with Him on their behalf. All prophets عليهم السلام will offer their excuse. Only the Holy Prophet ﷺ shall be blessed with the honorable station of interceding on behalf of the entire progeny of 'Ādam. Ḥadīth reports carry lengthy relevant details that appear in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Maẓharī at this point.

The intercession made by prophets and the righteous will be accepted

Out of the Islamic sects, the Khawārij and the Mu'tazilah deny the intercession of prophets. They say that a major sin will not be forgiven through intercession by anyone. But, Aḥādīth coming in uninterrupted succession prove that the intercession for sinners will be accepted from prophets عليهم السلام, even from the righteous of the community. There will be many whose sins will be forgiven through intercession.

Based on a report from Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه, it appears in Ibn Mājah and al-Baihaqī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: On the day of Qiyāmah, the blessed prophets will be the first to intercede on behalf of sinners, then the 'Ulamā' and then the Shuhadā'. According to Dailamī

reporting from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﷺ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the 'Ālim will be told that he could intercede on behalf of his disciples, even if their number matches the number of stars.

And Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Hibbān carry a narration of Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' ﷺ, with its chains ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who said: The intercession made by a Shahīd (شهيد) will be accepted in favor of seventy people from his family.

The Musnad of Aḥmad, al-Ṭabarānī and al-Baihaqi authentically report Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah ﷺ narrating that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: On the intercession of one person from my *ummah* many people, more than the entire number of the people of the tribes of Rabī'ah and Muḍar, will be admitted to Jannah.

A question and its answer

The question is when the Holy Prophet ﷺ will himself intercede - and no believer will remain in Hell because of it - why and how will the 'Ulamā' and the righteous intercede? The answer appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī: perhaps, the 'Ulamā' and the righteous of the community will present their intercession in favor of whomsoever they wish before the Holy Prophet ﷺ who will then intercede with Allah Ta'ālā.

An important note

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: شَفَاعَتِىْ لِاَهْلِ الْكَبَائِرِ مِنْ اُمَّتِى (My intercession shall be for people who had committed major sins). This seems to tell us that those involved with major sins will be forgiven particularly through the intercession of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Any angel or any individual from the Muslim community will not be able to intercede in the case of those who have committed major sins. Instead of that, the intercession made by the righteous of the Muslim community will be for those who were involved with minor sins.

The Station of Intercession could be reached through the efficacy of the prayer of Tahajjud

Haḍrat Mujaddid Alf Thānī, the famous religious revivalist of the first Islamic millenium in India, said that, in this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was first given the command to make the prayer of Tahajjud, then he was promised the Praised Station, that is, the Station of Grand Intercession. This tells us that the prayer of Tahajjud serves as a special

via media in acquiring the Station of Intercession.

Before we proceed to verse 80, let us recapitulate what was said in the verses previous to it. Mentioned there first were the pains inflicted on the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the conspiracies they kept hatching to hurt and harm him. Along with it, it was also said that these hostile plans made by them will never succeed. In contrast, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was being blessed with the real plan to offset their evil by prompting him to establish the five prayers, and the Tahajjud. Following that, he has been promised the Praised Station, the highest among all prophets - a promise to be fulfilled in the Hereafter. Now, in this verse 80: وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَدْخِلْنِی (And say, "O my Lord, make me enter...), the first relief to him against the hurtful and treacherous actions of the disbelievers was given by Allah Ta'ālā within this world in the form of his migration to Madīnah. Then, he was given the good news of the conquest of Makkah in: وَقُلْ جَآءَ الْحَقُّ (And say, "Truth has come...81).

It has been reported in al-Jāmi' of Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was in Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah. Then, he was commanded to migrate to Madīnah. Thereupon, this verse was revealed: وَقُلْ رَّبِّ اَدْخِلْنِیْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّاَخْرِجْنِیْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ (And say, "O my Lord, make me enter a rightful entrance and make me exit a rightful exit - 80). Here, the word: مُدْخَل (*mudkhal*) and مُخْرَج (*mukhraj*) meaning the place of entry and the place of exit are اسم ظرف (*ism-al-zarf*: the noun of place and time). The addition of the attribute (*na't*) of صِدْق :*ṣidq* (translated as rightful) releases the sense of such entry and exit being totally true to the will and pleasure of Allah and in the best of attending circumstances, because the word: صِدْق (*ṣidq*) is also used in the Arabic language for every such act as is correct and better both outwardly and inwardly. The words: قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ (Yūnus 10:2), لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ (ash-Shu'arā' 26:84) and مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ (al-Qamar 54:55) have been used in the Holy Qur'ān in that very sense.

'Entrance' means 'Madīnah' and the place of exit denotes 'Makkah.' The sense takes the form of a prayer: O Allah, may my entry into Madīnah turn out to be good and smooth, without having to face anything unpleasant and unwelcome on arrival there. And may my exit from Makkah be good and smooth, without being entangled in love of country and home.' There are other exegetic statements too which explain this verse. But, this particular explanation has been reported from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī

and Qatādah. Ibn Kathīr calls it 'the most sound statement.' Ibn Jarīr too has gone by it. As for the order, it required that the 'exit' should have been mentioned first while the 'entrance,' later. But, the precedence of 'entrance' and the succession of 'exit' is there, perhaps, to indicate that the exit from Makkah had no purpose of its own, in fact, parting from the Baytullah was extremely shocking. But, there was a purpose - to look for peace, for Islam and Muslims - something that could be hoped for through the entry in Madīnah. Therefore, the objective to be achieved was made to come first.

A prayer for important objectives

At the time of his migration to Madīnah, Allah Ta'ālā asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ to make this *du'ā'* which pleaded with Him that his exit from Makkah and then the arrival in Madīnah should both be good and smooth in all possible ways. It was the outcome of this prayer that, though he was within the striking range of the pursuing disbelievers at the time of Hijrah, yet Allah Ta'ālā shielded him at every step and finally made Madīnah al-Ṭayyibah good and promising for him and for all Muslims, both outwardly and inwardly. Therefore, some 'Ulamā' have said that every Muslim should remember to make this prayer at the beginning of all objectives they wish to pursue and that this prayer is beneficial for all objectives and purposes. The sentence which complements this very prayer appears next: وَاجْعَلْ لِّيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَّصِيْرًا : "and grant me from Your Own a power favoured (by You)." Qatādah, the great *tabi'ī* says: the Holy Prophet ﷺ knew that fulfilling his functional duties as a prophet and working while besieged by enemies were challenges he could not handle personally. Therefore, He prayed to Allah Ta'ālā for help and the power to subdue. The prayer was answered and everyone saw its effects.

Verse 81: وَقُلْ جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ (And say, "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished") was revealed after Hijrah about the conquest of Makkah. Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ says that on the day Makkah was conquered, the Holy Prophet ﷺ entered Makkah. At that time, there were three hundred and sixty idols standing around the Baytullah. Some *'Ulamā'* report a reason for this particular number. They say that the Mushriks of Makkah had a separate idol for each day of the year that they used to worship on the given day. (Qurṭubī) When the Holy Prophet ﷺ

reached there, this was the verse he had on his blessed lips: جَآءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ (Truth has come and falsehood has vanished) while he went round striking at each single idol on the chest with his stick. (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

It appears in some Ḥadīth narratives that the end of this stick had a pewter or iron ferrule mounted on it. So, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ would hit an idol on the chest, it would fall back. In the end, when all idols fell down, he gave orders that they be demolished. (Qurṭubī with reference to Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ and al-Qushairī)

It is necessary to erase customs and symbols of polytheism, disbelief and falsehood

Imām al-Qurṭubī said that this verse proves that it is *wājib* (necessary, obligatory) to erase the idols of Mushriks and all other polytheistic symbols and signs - and all such false instruments that are used in the way of sin and disobedience as well. They too come under the purview of the same injunction. Ibn al-Mundhir said that pictures and sculpted figures made in wood or metal etc. also come under the injunction governing idols. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had torn the curtain having pictures made on it in lines and colors. This, incidentally, tells us about the general injunctions covering common pictures. According to Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, when Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will come towards the later times, he will undo the cross and eliminate the swine. These things prove that it is necessary to demolish and eliminate the instruments of *shirk, kufr* and *bāṭil.*

We can now move to the last verse (82) cited above: وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَآءٌ (And We reveal the Qur'ān which is a cure). That the Holy Qur'ān cures hearts and delivers people from *shirk* and *kufr,* low morals and spiritual ailments is no secret. The entire Muslim *ummah* agrees with it. And according to some 'Ulamā', the way the Qur'ān is a cure for spiritual ailments, it is also a cure for physical diseases. The sense is that reciting the verses of the Qur'ān and blowing the breath on the body of the sick person or to write its words on an amulet and putting it around the neck is also expected to be a cure for physical diseases. Ḥadīth narratives bear testimony to it. The Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه can be seen in all books of Aḥādīth. It says that a party of the noble Companions was in travel. In a village on their way, a scorpion had bitten the chief. The village people asked the Companions if they could suggest

some treatment for it. They recited the Sūrah al-Fātiḥah seven times, blew their breath on him and the ailing patient stood cured. Later, when this incident was mentioned before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he declared this action of the Companions to be permissible.

Similarly, there are several other Ḥadīth reports which prove that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has done it himself. After having recited the last two verses of the Qur'ān, he would blow his breath on the sick person. It is also proved that the Ṣaḥābah and the Ṭabi'īn used to treat sick people with the recital of the last two verses of the Qur'ān as well as with the recital of other verses from it. That it was written and placed around the neck as an amulet also stands proved. Al-Qurṭubī has given details about it under his commentary on this verse.

The last sentence of the verse: وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظّٰلِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا (And it adds nothing to the unjust but loss - 82) tells us that the Holy Qur'ān - when recited with faith and reverence - is certainly a cure. It is open. It is proven. Conversely, any denial of the Qur'ān, or irreverence to it, could also become a source of loss and misfortunes.

Verses 83 - 84

وَإِذَآ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَا بِجَانِبِهِ ۚ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ كَانَ
يَئُوسًا ﴿٨٣﴾ قُلْ كُلٌّ يَّعْمَلُ عَلٰى شَاكِلَتِهِ ۖ فَرَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ هُوَ
أَهْدٰى سَبِيلًا ﴿٨٤﴾

And when We bestow Our favor upon man, he avoids (to recognize it) and keeps himself far aside (from obedience), and when some evil touches him, he is in total despair. [83]

Say, "Everyone acts in his own style. For, your Lord knows best which one is better guided in his way." [84]

Commentary

Regarding the explanation of the word: شَاكِلَة (*shākilah*) in verse 84: كُلٌّ يَّعْمَلُ عَلٰى شَاكِلَتِهِ (Everyone acts in his own style), several interpretations have been reported from authorities among the early righteous elders, such as, disposition, habit, instinct, intention, way or manner. In sum,

all these turn into a second nature in terms of the circumstances, habits and customs everyone lives with. Thus, what one does remains subservient to it. (Qurṭubī) In this verse, human beings have been warned that they must abstain from bad surroundings, bad company and bad habits and take to the company of good people and inculcate good habits (al-Jaṣṣāṣ). The reason, as stated earlier, is that one's response pattern built up under the influence of surrounding, company and custom makes one do what it dictates. Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ has also given another meaning of *'shākilah'* at this place, that of 'like.' Given this meaning, the sense of the verse would be that everyone feels comfortable with a person who is compatible with one's temperament. A good man finds another good man familiar while a wicked man feels comfortable with another wicked man whose style he follows without any qualms of conscience. An example of this behavior pattern appears in what Allah says in the Qur'ān: اَلْخَبِيْثٰتُ لِلْخَبِيْثِيْنَ (Evil women are for evil men - 24:26) and وَالطَّيِّبٰتُ لِلطَّيِّبِيْنَ (Good women are for good men - 24:26). It means that everyone strikes familiarity with a man or woman according to one's own temperament. In short, this too is a warning against falling into bad company and bad habits. One should really make an effort to abstain from these.

Verses 85 - 89

وَيَسْئَلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الرُّوْحِ ؕ قُلِ الرُّوْحُ مِنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّیْ وَمَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ
اِلَّا قَلِيْلاً ﴿۸۵﴾ وَلَئِنْ شِئْنَا لَنَذْهَبَنَّ بِالَّذِیْۤ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ
بِهٖ عَلَيْنَا وَكِيْلاً ﴿۸۶﴾ اِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ؕ اِنَّ فَضْلَهٗ كَانَ عَلَيْكَ
كَبِيْرًا ﴿۸۷﴾ قُلْ لَّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْاِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلٰۤى اَنْ يَّاْتُوْا بِمِثْلِ هٰذَا
الْقُرْاٰنِ لَا يَاْتُوْنَ بِمِثْلِهٖ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيْرًا ﴿۸۸﴾ وَلَقَدْ
صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِیْ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ؗ فَاَبٰۤى اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ اِلَّا
كُفُوْرًا ﴿۸۹﴾

And they ask you about the soul. Say, "The soul is something from the command of my Lord, and you are not given but a little from the knowledge." [85]

And if We so will, We will surely take away what We have revealed to you, then you shall find no one to rely upon against Us in this matter. [86] **But it is a mercy from your Lord. Great is indeed His favor upon you.** [87]

Say, "If all the humans and *jinns* join together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they shall not (be able to) come up with its like, even though they back up one another. [88]

And surely We have explained for the people in this Qur'ān every subject in various ways. Still most of the people refused to do anything but reject. [89]

Commentary

The first verse (85) appearing above carries a question posed by disbelievers about Rūḥ (soul, spirit) along with its answer that came from Allah Ta'ālā. The word: اَلرُّوْحُ (*al-rūḥ*) is used in the Arabic language and idiom, and in the Holy Qur'ān as well, to convey several meanings. The well-recognized meaning taken from this word is common knowledge, that is, the soul on which depends life. In the Holy Qur'ān, this word has also been used for the archangel, Jibra'īl al-Amīn (Gabriel, the Trustworthy): نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوْحُ الْاَمِيْنُ عَلٰى قَلْبِكَ (The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down upon your heart - ash-Shu'ārā' 26:193,194). It has also been used for Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام (4:171), and Waḥy (revelation - 40:15), and the Qur'ān too: اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ رُوْحًا مِّنْ اَمْرِنَا (and We have revealed to you a spirit of Our command - 42:52).

What does 'Rūḥ' signify?

Therefore, the first thing to be determined here is the intent of the questioners as to which meaning they had in mind when they had asked the question about the Rūḥ. Some respected early commentators have, in view of the context, declared this question as related to revelation and Qur'ān, or to angel Jibra'īl who brought it. The apparent reason is that the Qur'ān was mentioned earlier in: وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ (And We reveal the Qur'ān - 82) and it is again the Qur'ān that finds mention in the verses after that. Given this congruity, they found it appropriate to take 'Rūḥ' in this question too as signifying nothing but Waḥy and Qur'ān, or Jibra'īl. In that case, the question would be about how the Waḥy or revelation came to him and who brought it. In response to the question, the Holy Qur'ān considered it sufficient to say that the revelation was from

the command of Allah. It elected to be silent about its details and modalities that the questioners were seeking.

But, the background of the revelation of this verse given in authentic Aḥādīth ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is just about very clear in respect of the nature of the question. Those asking the question had asked about the living Rūḥ and the underlying purpose was to find out the reality of Rūḥ. What is it? How does it come in and go out of the human body? How does it make man and animal come alive? According to the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه narrates:

'Once I was walking with the Holy Prophet ﷺ through an unpopulated part of Madīnah. He had a stick from the branch of a date palm in his blessed hand. When he passed by some Jews, they were talking among themselves: Muhammad ﷺ is coming. Ask him about the Rūḥ. Others asked them not to do that. But, those bent on asking went ahead and asked the question. After having heard the question, the Holy Prophet ﷺ reclined on his stick and stood silent which gave me the inkling that the revelation was about to come on him. After a little while, when the revelation had come to him, he recited the verse: وَيَسْئَلُوْنَكَ عَنِ الرُّوْحِ (And they ask you about the Rūḥ).'

At this point, it is understandable that it was a terminology of the Qur'ān when it called the Qur'ān, or Waḥy (revelation) as Rūḥ. That the question asked by these people was based on it is too far out. Of course, the matter of the living Rūḥ, human or animal, is such as would naturally emerge in everyone's mind. Therefore, the majority of commentators - Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Jarīr, al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, 'Ālūsī - confirm the view that the question related to the reality of the living Rūḥ. As for the continuity of references to the Qur'ān in the context and that the question-answer interlude about Rūḥ coming in between would be incoherent, its answer is clear. Previous verses have mentioned hostile questions asked by the disbelievers and Mushriks. Their objective thereby was to test the Holy Prophet ﷺ concerning his claim to be a messenger of Allah. This question too is a link of the same chain. Therefore, it is not incoherent. There is yet another authentic Ḥadīth reported about the background of the revelation of this verse particularly. The position being explained here has been covered there

more explicitly, that is, the purpose of the questioner was to test the authority of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a Messenger.

Accordingly, a report of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad says that the Quraysh of Makkah who kept addressing all sorts of questions to the Holy Prophet ﷺ hit upon the idea that the Jews were learned and knew about past scriptures. Why not ask them about what to ask the Holy Prophet ﷺ and test him thereby? Therefore, they sent their men to the Jews seeking their guidance in this matter. They told them to ask about the Rūḥ. (Ibn Kathīr) Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has also been reported to have said in his explanation of this verse that the Jews had also said while asking this question - 'you tell us how does punishment affect the Rūḥ.' By that time, nothing had been revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ about it. Therefore, he did not answer the question instantly at that time. Then, came angel Jibra'īl with the verse: قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي (Say, "the Rūḥ is from the command of my Lord.") (Abridged from Ibn Kathīr)

The incident of the question: Did it happen in Makkah or Madīnah?

Before we resolve this aspect of the question, we have to consider the two Ḥadīth reports relating to the background of the revelation of this verse, that of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, referred to above. Out of the two, according to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ, this incident about the question came to pass in Madīnah - and that is the reason why some commentators have declared this verse to be Madani, though a major portion of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (al-Isrā') is Makkī. As for the report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, it places the incident at Makkah. In accordance with that, this verse too remains Makki like the whole Sūrah. Therefore, Ibn Kathīr has declared this very probability to be weightier and more acceptable. And as for the report of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ, he responds by saying that it is possible that this verse was revealed in Madīnah a second time - as a repeated revelation of many verses of the Qur'ān is an accepted fact in the sight of all 'Ulamā'. And Tafsīr Maẓharī, by declaring the report of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd as weightier and more acceptable, has determined the incident to be that of Madīnah and the verse to be Madani. It gives two reasons for it. Firstly, this report appears in the two Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhari and Muslim and its

authority is stronger as compared to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ. Secondly, in this report, Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd is a part of the incident. He is narrating an event that was his own. This makes it contrary to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās where, it is obvious, he would have heard it as told by someone (because he was too young at that time to witness the occurance).

The answer to the question asked

The Holy Qur'ān said: قُلِ الرُّوْحُ مِنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّيْ (Say, "the Rūḥ is from the command of my Lord."). While explaining the answer, statements and interpretations given by commentators differ. The closest and the clearest of these is what Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānipatī has preferred in his Tafsīr Maẓharī. He says: Only what was necessary and what common people would understand has been told - and the full reality of Rūḥ, that the question sought, was not unfolded because it was beyond the comprehension of common people and, for that matter, nothing they needed hinged on understanding it. Here, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked to respond by saying that 'the Rūḥ is from the command of my Lord.' In other words, it is not like the usual created that come into existence through the dispersal of matter and procreation. In fact, it is something created directly through the command (كُنْ: *kun:* be) of Allah Ta'ālā. At least, this much of the answer makes it clear that Rūḥ cannot be taken on the analogy of common matter - which removes all those doubts that emerge as a result of trying to understand Rūḥ through the prism of materialistic inquiry. The hard truth is that this much knowledge of Rūḥ is sufficient for man. No business, religious or worldly, depends on knowing more than that. Therefore, taking that part of the question as redundant and unnecessary, it was not answered - specially when understanding its reality is something not easy even for the wisest of the wise, not to say much about the common people.

Answering every question is not necessary unless religiously advisable

Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has deduced from this answer the ruling that it is not necessary for the Muftī and 'Ālim to answer every question and every aspect from it as posed by the questioner. Instead of doing that, the answer should be given with religious advisability kept in sight. Any answer that is above the comprehension of the addressee, or

should there be the danger of his or her falling into misunderstanding, then, such an answer should not be given. Similarly, not to be answered are questions that are unnecessary (لا يعني :*lā ya'nī*). Yes, should there be a person who faces a situation in which he must act one way or the other and who is no 'Ālim, then, it is necessary for the Muftī and 'Ālim to give an answer in the light of his knowledge. (Jaṣṣāṣ) Imām al-Bukhārī has devoted a chapter heading in Kitāb al-'Ilm to highlight this point. He has said that a question the answer to which is likely to cause misunderstanding should not be answered.

Whether or not it is possible for anyone to have the knowledge of the reality of Rūḥ

The Holy Qur'ān has given an answer to this question in accordance with the need and comprehension of the addressee. It has not elected to unfold the reality of Rūḥ. But, it does not necessarily imply that no human being can simply understand the reality of Rūḥ and that the Holy Prophet ﷺ also did not know its reality. The truth of the matter is that this verse neither negates nor confirms it. If a prophet or messenger were to come to know its reality through Waḥy (revelation), or a Waliyy (man of Allah) through Kashf (illumination) and Ilhām (inspiration), then, it is not contrary to this verse. In fact, even if this matter is debated and investigated in terms of reason and philosophy, it would certainly be called useless and unnecessary, but it cannot be called impermissible. Therefore, many learned scholars from the early and later period of Islam have written standard books about Rūḥ. In our period, my venerated teacher, Shaykh al-Islam, Shabbīr Aḥmad Usmānī has presented this issue admirably in a small tract. Here, he has explained its reality to the measure it is possible for a common person to understand and an educated one to find sufficient enough to avoid doubts and difficulties.

An important note

At this juncture, Imām al-Baghawī has carried a detail report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه as follows: This verse was revealed in Makkah al-Mukarramah. It happened at a time when the Quraysh chiefs of Makkah got together and talked about the problem that Muḥammad ﷺ was born amongst us and grew up into a young man. No one ever doubted his trustworthiness, honesty and truthfulness, and he was never accused by anyone of having told a lie. Yet, despite all that,

we just do not understand the claim of being a prophet he was now making. Therefore, let us do something about it, like sending our delegation to the Jewish scholars of Madīnah and get a learned opinion about him from them. So, a delegation from the Quraysh met the Jewish scholars in Madīnah. They advised: 'we tell you three things. Ask him about these three. If he answers all three, he is no prophet. Similarly, if he does not answer any of the three, he is still no prophet. And if he answers two, not answering the third, be certain that he is the prophet.'* They proposed three questions: (1) Ask him about those in the past who had sought refuge in a cave to stay safe from *shirk* - because, their account is unique. (2) Ask him about the person who had traveled through the East and West of the Earth and what had happened to him. (3) Ask him about the Rūḥ (soul, spirit).

The delegation returned and posed those three questions before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He said, 'I shall give you the answer to these tomorrow'- but, he did not say, *"Insha'Allah"* with it. The outcome was that the channel of Waḥy (revelation) remained discontinued for a few days. There are various reports that put the number of days from twelve, fifteen to forty during which it stood stopped. The Quraysh of Makkah had their opportunity to hurl taunts - 'we were promised an answer tomorrow, now so many days have passed and we have no answer!' This caused the Holy Prophet ﷺ too to become anxious. Then came angel Jibra'īl with the verse: وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَایْءٍ اِنِّیْ فَاعِلٌ ذٰلِكَ غَدًا اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ (And never say about anything: "I will do that tomorrow," without [saying]: *"Insha'Allāh"*: [If Allah wills].' - al-Kahf, 18: 23,24) and, after that, he recited the verse about the Rūḥ mentioned above. Then came the revelation of the verses relating to the people of Kahf, and the event of Dhul-Qarnain who had traveled from the East to the West which is to appear in Sūrah al-Kahf. A detailed answer has been given there by narrating the story of the people of Kahf and Dhul-Qarnain while the question concerned with the reality of the Rūḥ was not answered (which made the sign of the veracity of prophecy given by the Jews manifest). Tirmidhī has also described this event briefly. (Maẓharī)

Investigative observations on the reality of Rūḥ (soul, spirit) and

*. This detail is in accordance with Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl, p. 134, v. 4 - Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī.

Nafs (self) have appeared earlier in this volume under verse 29 of Sūrah al-Ḥijr: نَفَخْتُ فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِي (I have blown into him of my spirit - 15:29). Presented with reference to Tafsīr Maẓharī, it makes the kinds of Rūḥ along with the reality of each sufficiently clear.

We can now move to verse 86: وَلَئِنْ شِئْنَا لَنَذْهَبَنَّ (And if We so will, We will surely take away...). It will be recollected that, in the previous verse (85), by giving an answer to the question about Rūḥ as true to the measure of its necessity, the underlying effort to find out the reality of the Rūḥ was blocked and it was declared that man's knowledge, no matter how much, still remains relatively insignificant in terms of the great span of the ultimate reality of things. Therefore, getting entangled with unnecessary debates and investigations is a waste of precious time. The present verse: وَلَئِنْ شِئْنَا (And if We so will) indicates that the sum total of whatever knowledge human beings have been given, even that is no private property of theirs. Allah Taʿālā can, if He so wills, take away that too. Therefore, they should be grateful to Allah for whatever of knowledge they have and stay away from wasting time in redundant and unnecessary investigations - specially when pure investigation is just not the objective, instead, testing others or belittling them is. If one did that, it is not out of the realm of possibility that this crookedness may result in all that one has in the name of knowledge taken away in toto. The address in this verse is, though, to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but the purpose is to really make his followers listen and get the message - when even the knowledge of the Rasūl of Allah is not within his exclusive power and control, not much can be said about others!

The subject in verse 88: قُلْ لَّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ (If all humans and *jinns* join together...) appears in some other verses of the Holy Qur'ān as well. Challenging the humankind, it has been said there: If you do not take the Qur'ān to be the word of Allah, rather take it to be a word of man, then, you too are human, why would you not come up with its like? Along with that challenge, it was also said in this verse: Not the humankind alone, you are welcome to join up with *jinns,* but you, all combined together, will still be unable to come out with one Sūrah - even one verse - like that of the Qur'ān.

The repetition of this subject at this place may possibly be to show the futility of what the deniers of the message were trying to do. Here

they were trying to test the veracity of the mission of a prophet of Allah by asking all sorts of questions, the one about the Rūḥ being one of them. Being an exercise in futility, why would they go about digging into unnecessary issues only to determine whether or not the prophet sent to them was true? Why they would not look into the Qur'ān as it is? It leaves no room for doubt in the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as prophet and messenger of Allah. The reason is simple. When the humans and *jinns* of the whole world are incapable of producing the least like of it, what doubt could there be in that it is but the Divine Word. And once it is proved so manifestly that the Holy Qur'ān is Divine Word, hardly any doubt remains in that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a true prophet and messenger of Allah.

The last verse: وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا (And surely We have explained - 89) tells us that the Holy Qur'ān stands out as a miracle so clear that it leaves no room for any question and doubt. Still, what is happening is that people do not thank Allah for His blessings, do not even recognize the real worth of the blessing of the Qur'ān and keep wandering around in error.

Verses 90 - 95

وَقَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتّٰى تَفْجُرَ لَنَا مِنَ الْاَرْضِ يَنْبُوْعًا ﴿٩٠﴾ اَوْ تَكُوْنَ
لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّخِيْلٍ وَّعِنَبٍ فَتُفَجِّرَ الْاَنْهٰرَ خِلٰلَهَا تَفْجِيْرًا ﴿٩١﴾
اَوْ تُسْقِطَ السَّمَآءَ كَمَا زَعَمْتَ عَلَيْنَا كِسَفًا اَوْ تَاْتِيَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ
قَبِيْلًا ﴿٩٢﴾ اَوْ يَكُوْنَ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِّنْ زُخْرُفٍ اَوْ تَرْقٰى فِى السَّمَآءِ ؕ وَلَنْ
نُّؤْمِنَ لِرُقِيِّكَ حَتّٰى تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتٰبًا نَّقْرَؤُهٗ ؕ قُلْ سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّيْ هَلْ
كُنْتُ اِلَّا بَشَرًا رَّسُوْلًا ﴿٩٣﴾ وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ اَنْ يُّؤْمِنُوْٓا اِذْ جَآءَهُمُ
الْهُدٰٓى اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوْٓا اَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ بَشَرًا رَّسُوْلًا ﴿٩٤﴾ قُلْ لَّوْ كَانَ فِى
الْاَرْضِ مَلٰٓئِكَةٌ يَّمْشُوْنَ مُطْمَئِنِّيْنَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ مَلَكًا
رَّسُوْلًا ﴿٩٥﴾

And they said, "We shall never believe in you unless you

make a spring gush forth for us from the earth. [90] **Or you have a garden of date-palms and grapes, then you bring forth rivers from their midst in abundance.** [91] **Or you cause the sky to fall upon us in pieces, as you claimed, or you bring Allah and angels before us face to face.** [92] **Or you have a house made of gold; or you ascend to the sky, and we will not believe in your ascension unless you send down to us a book we may read. Say, "I proclaim the Purity of my Lord. I am nothing but human, a messenger."** [93]

And nothing prevented people from believing, when guidance came to them, except that they said, "Has Allah sent a man as a messenger?" [94]

Say, "Were there angels (living) on the earth, walking about in peace, We would have certainly sent down an angel from the heavens as a messenger." [95]

Commentary

A prophetic answer to hostile questions sounding absurd

The questions asked and the demands made in these verses from the Holy Prophet ﷺ were virtually conditions on the fulfillment of which his antagonists were supposed to believe. These conditions are such that anyone who hears them would find them nothing but some sort of weird mockery and certainly a very absurd excuse for not believing. While having to respond to such questions, one becomes naturally angry and retorts in the same manner. But, the answer that Allah Ta'ālā taught His prophet عليهم السلام to give against their impertinent questions reported in this verse is something significant for everyone. Particularly so, for the leaders and reformers of the Muslim community who would do well to always remember it making it a regular feature of their work among people. Is it not that, in answer to all that, nothing was said about their lack of sense, nor mention was made of their hostile mischief, nor there was any verbal duel fought against them? Instead, the truth of the matter was made clear to them in very simple words. In effect, they were told: Perhaps, you think that a person who comes as a messenger of Allah should also be the possessor of all Divine powers and should be able to control everything. This is a mistaken notion. The duty of a messenger of Allah is only to convey the Divine message. It is a different matter that Allah would also send many miracles to prove the veracity of the mission of His apostles, prophets and messengers. But, that takes

place exclusively with the power and under the control of Allah Ta'ālā. A *rasūl* (messenger) is not given Divine powers. He is a human being and is never outside the framework of human power - except that Allah Ta'ālā alone were to manifest His great subduing power to help him.

Only a human being can be a messenger of Allah: Angels cannot be sent as messengers to human beings

Common disbelievers and polytheists thought that *'bashar,'* that is, a man, could not be the messenger of Allah because he is someone accustomed to all human compulsions like them. When so, what edge did he have over them to make them call him the messenger of Allah and take him as their leader claiming that they follow him? This assumption of theirs has been answered in the Holy Qur'ān, at several places in various ways. The outcome of the answer given here in this verse: مَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ (And nothing prevented people - 94) is that a messenger of Allah sent to a set of people has to be from their genus or race. If these people are human, the messenger should be human because mutual congruity does not exist between one genus and the other - and without congruity, guidance and grooming bring no benefit. Had some angel been sent to men as their messenger, he would have known no hunger, or thirst, or sexual desires, nor would he have felt the effect of chill and heat, nor fatigue after hard work. He would have, then, expected human beings to act like him without having ever realized their weaknesses and limitations. Similarly, when human beings knew that he was an angel, after all, they would have come to the conclusion that they just did not have the ability to do what he did. Who would have, then, followed him? Following is the fruit of correction, reform and right guidance. This benefit can be hoped for only when the messenger of Allah is from the genus of men. He should be an embodiment of human emotions and physical desires while, at the same time, he should also have an angelic majesty that could serve as a liaison - intermediary communicator - between human beings and angels, receiving revelation from angels bringing it and communicating it to his fellow human beings.

This submission also removes the doubt that arises by thinking: when human beings cannot derive benefit from the angel, how would a messenger - despite being human - derive the benefit of revelation from them?

As for the doubt - when the compatibility of genus is a condition between a messenger and his people, how was the Holy Prophet ﷺ made a messenger of the *jinns* for they are not from the same genus as men? - it can be answered by saying that the messenger is not simply a human being, instead, he also has an angelic majesty about him because of which *jinns* too could also be congruous to him.

In the last verse (95), it was said that they, despite being human, cannot demand that their messenger should be an angel. This demand was unreasonable. Yes, if angels had been living on the Earth and there was the need to send a messenger to them, then, indeed, an angel would have been sent as a messenger. It will be noted that the attribute of angels living on the Earth has been described here in the words: يَمْشُوْنَ مُطْمَئِنِّيْنَ (walking about in peace). This tells us that the need to send an angel deputed as a messenger to other angels would have come up only at a time when the angels of the Earth could not themselves go to the heavens rather remained living on the Earth alone. Otherwise, had they themselves possessed the power to go to the heavens, there would have remained just no need to send a messenger to the Earth.

Verses 96 - 100

قُلْ كَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًا بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهٖ خَبِيْرًا ۢ بَصِيْرًا
﴿٩٦﴾ وَمَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ اَوْلِيَاۗءَ
مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ ۭ وَنَحْشُرُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ عَلٰي وُجُوْهِهِمْ عُمْيًا وَّبُكْمًا
وَّصُمًّا ۭ مَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۭ كُلَّمَا خَبَتْ زِدْنٰهُمْ سَعِيْرًا ﴿٩٧﴾ ذٰلِكَ
جَزَاۗؤُهُمْ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَقَالُوْٓا ءَاِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَّرُفَاتًا ءَاِنَّا
لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ خَلْقًا جَدِيْدًا ﴿٩٨﴾ اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضَ قَادِرٌ عَلٰٓي اَنْ يَّخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَهُمْ اَجَلًا لَّا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ۭ
فَاَبَى الظّٰلِمُوْنَ اِلَّا كُفُوْرًا ﴿٩٩﴾ قُلْ لَّوْ اَنْتُمْ تَمْلِكُوْنَ خَزَاۗىِٕنَ رَحْمَةِ
رَبِّيْٓ اِذًا لَّاَمْسَكْتُمْ خَشْيَةَ الْاِنْفَاقِ ۭ وَكَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ قَتُوْرًا ﴿١٠٠﴾ ع

Say, "Allah is sufficient as witness between me and you. Surely, about His servants, He is All-Aware, All-Watchful." [96]

And the one whom Allah guides is the guided one. And whom He lets go astray, you will never find for them any helpers other than Him. And We shall gather them on the Day of Judgment their faces down - blind, dumb and deaf. Their abode is the Fire. Whenever it calms down, We increase the flames for them. [97]

That is their punishment, because they rejected Our signs and said, "What! Once we are reduced to bones and dust, is it, then, that we shall be raised, created anew?" [98]

Have they not seen that Allah who has created the heavens and the earth has the power to create them as they were? And (for this) He has appointed a time in which there is no doubt. Still, the wrongdoers refused to do anything but reject. [99]

Say, "If you were to own the treasures of my Lord's blessing, even then you would certainly hold them back, lest it should be spent. And man is so niggardly. [100]

Commentary

The truth of the matter about what has been said in the last verse (100) is that the treasures of the mercy of Allah are limit-less and end-less. They are never going to end, but man is by nature narrow-minded, short on courage. When it comes to giving, he is not motivated enough to share what he has with others.

Commentators generally take the expression 'the treasures of the Lord's blessing or mercy' to mean the treasures of wealth. This has its link with previous verses (90,91) where the disbelievers of Makkah had demanded that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should - if he was really a prophet in truth - make rivers flow in the barren desert of Makkah and transform it into lush green farms, like the land of Syria. The answer to this was given right there (93), saying in effect: This is as if you have taken me to be nothing short of God whose authority you want me to exercise. As for me, I am only a messenger of Allah, not Allah. I cannot do what I will. If we see this verse in this context, it would mean: If you are asking me to turn this desert land of Makkah into a green land to test my verac-

ity as prophet and messenger, then, the miracle of the eloquence of the Qur'ān is sufficient to prove that. There is no need for any other demands. And if this is to meet the needs of your country and people, remember that, even if you are given everything you demand for the land of Makkah, and all sorts of treasures with it, it would not result in the prosperity of the masses of your country. In fact, human nature will take its course and whoever gets hold of these treasures will sit on them like legendary serpents. Tell them to spend it on the people and you will see them all consumed by the fear that it will go out of their hands. In a situation like this, if a few rich men of Makkah get to be richer and opulent, what are the masses of people going to get out of it? Most commentators have declared this to be the sense of the verse.

My master and mentor, Ḥaḍrat Thānavī, in his Bayān al-Qur'ān, has interpreted 'my Lord's mercy' as the station of prophet-hood and messenger-ship, and 'the treasures of mercy' as the varied perfection of prophet-hood. Given this Tafsīr, this verse will be linked with previous verses by saying: The outcome of all those absurd demands you are making against my status as a prophet and messenger of Allah is that you just do not want to believe in it. Do you, then, want that the function of prophet-hood should be entrusted in your hands, so that you can make anyone a prophet at your sweet will? If such a wish were to be granted, the consequence would be that you would never give prophet-hood or messenger-ship to anyone, sitting over it like misers. After having given this explanation, he has added that this Tafsīr is something that comes as one of the many divine gifts. It fits the occasion. Interpreting prophet-hood in this setting with mercy would be similar to its interpretation in the verse of Sūrah az-Zukhruf. It was said: أَهُمْ يَقْسِمُوْنَ رَحْمَةَ رَبِّكَ (Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord? - 43:32). Here, *'raḥmah'* (mercy) means nothing but *'nubuwwah'* (prophet-hood) - and there is a consensus on it. Allah knows best.

Verses 101 - 109

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى تِسْعَ اٰيٰتٍ بَيِّنٰتٍ فَسْئَلْ بَنِىْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اِذْ جَآءَهُمْ
فَقَالَ لَهٗ فِرْعَوْنُ اِنِّىْ لَاَظُنُّكَ يٰمُوْسٰى مَسْحُوْرًا ﴿١٠١﴾ قَالَ لَقَدْ

عَلِمْتَ مَآ اَنْزَلَ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اِلاَّ رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ بَصَآئِرَ ۚ وَ اِنِّیْ
لَاَظُنُّكَ يٰفِرْعَوْنُ مَثْبُوْرًا ﴿۱۰۲﴾ فَاَرَادَ اَنْ يَّسْتَفِزَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ فَاَغْرَقْنٰهُ
وَمَنْ مَّعَهٗ جَمِيْعًا ﴿۱۰۳﴾ وَّقُلْنَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ لِبَنِیْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اسْكُنُوا
الْاَرْضَ فَاِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ الْاٰخِرَةِ جِئْنَا بِكُمْ لَفِيْفًا ﴿۱۰۴﴾ وَبِالْحَقِّ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ
وَبِالْحَقِّ نَزَلَ ؕ وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ اِلاَّ مُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ﴿۱۰۵﴾ وَقُرْاٰنًا فَرَقْنٰهُ
لِتَقْرَاَهٗ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلٰى مُكْثٍ وَّنَزَّلْنٰهُ تَنْزِيْلاً ﴿۱۰۶﴾ قُلْ اٰمِنُوْا بِهٖٓ اَوْلاَ
تُؤْمِنُوْا ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖٓ اِذَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ يَخِرُّوْنَ
لِلْاَذْقَانِ سُجَّدًا ﴿۱۰۷﴾ وَّيَقُوْلُوْنَ سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّنَآ اِنْ كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا
لَمَفْعُوْلاً ﴿۱۰۸﴾ وَيَخِرُّوْنَ لِلْاَذْقَانِ يَبْكُوْنَ وَيَزِيْدُهُمْ خُشُوْعًا
﴿۱۰۹﴾ السجدة

And surely we gave Mūsā nine clear signs. So, ask the children of Isrā'īl, when he came to them, the Pharaoh said to him, "I am afraid, O Mūsā, you are under the spell of magic." [101] **He said, "You know well that these (signs) are sent down by none but by the Lord of the heavens and the earth as eye-openers. And, I am afraid O Pharaoh, you are going to be destroyed."** [102]

Then he (the Pharaoh) tried to harass him out of the land, so We drowned him and those with him altogether, [103] **and thereafter We said to the children of Isrā'īl, "Live in the land. So, when the appointed time of the Hereafter will come, We shall bring you all joined together."** [104]

And with truth We have sent it down and with truth it descended. And We did not send you but as a bearer of good tidings and as a warner. [105]

And We have divided the Qur'ān in portions, so that you may recite it to the people gradually, and We have revealed it little by little. [106]

Say, "Believe it or do not believe it; when it is recited to those who were given knowledge before it, they fall down on their faces in prostration [107] **and say, "Pure is**

our Lord. Certainly, the word of our Lord is sure to be done." [108] **And they fall down on their faces weeping and it increases them in the humbleness of heart.** [109]

Commentary

The first verse (101): وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى تِسْعَ اٰيٰتٍ mentions the bestowal of nine clear signs on Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. The word: آية (*'āyah*) carries the meaning of miracle or sign as well as that of the آيٰت: *āyāt* or verses of the Qur'ān, that is, the divine injunctions. At this place, the probability of both meanings exists. Therefore, a number of commentators have taken the word '*āyāt*' to mean miracles - and the number nine does not make it necessary that they will not be more than nine - but, at this place, the figure 'nine' has been mentioned on the basis of some particular importance it has. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has enumerated these miracles as follows:

1. The staff of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which turned into a huge snake.
2. The hand that emitted light when placed under and taken out of the armpit.
3. The removal of stammering from his tongue.
4. The splitting of the water barrier in two sections to give safe passage to the Banī Isrā'īl to cross it.
5. The sending of the punishment through locusts in unusual circumstances.
6. The sending of the storm.
7. The clothes on their bodies were infested with countless lice they had no escape from.
8. The punishment of frogs was released on them when frogs would appear in everything they ate or drank.
9. The punishment of blood was sent that filled every utensil and mingled with whatever they ate or drank.

And a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth tells us that the word '*āyāt*' used here means divine injunctions. This Ḥadīth has been reported in Abū Dāwūd, an-Nasā'ī, Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah on the authority of Sayyidnā Safwān

ibn al-'Aththāl ﷺ. He says that a Jew asked one of his friends to take him to 'that' prophet. The friend said, 'do not call him a prophet. If he finds out that we too call him a prophet, he will have four eyes on him (that is, he will have an opportunity to wallow in his pride and glee).' Then they came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked him as to what were the nine clear signs given to Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ. He said:

1. Do not ascribe any partners to Allah.

2. Do not steal.

3. Do not fornicate.

4. Do not unjustly take the life of the one whose killing has been forbidden by Allah.

5. Do not falsely impute anyone innocent with charges liable to the sentence of death or any other punishment.

6. Do not practice magic.

7. Do not devour interest.

8. Do not level a false accusation of fornication on a chaste woman.

9. Do not desert the battlefield in Jihād for fear of being killed.

And he also said, 'O Jews, it has also been specially enjoined on you that you shall not contravene the particular injunctions of the observance of the day of Sabbath (Saturday) given to you.'

Hearing what the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, they both kissed his hands and feet and declared, 'We bear witness that you are the prophet of Allah.' He said, 'What is it, then, that stops you from following me?' They said that Sayyidnā Dāwūd ﷺ had prayed to his Lord for prophets to always keep appearing from among his progeny - 'and we are scared that the Jews will kill us if we started following you.'

Since this explanation of the verse stands proved on the authority of Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, therefore, this is what many commentators have preferred to go by.

About the last sentence: يَبْكُوْنَ وَيَزِيْدُهُمْ خُشُوْعًا (And they fall down on their faces weeping and it increases them in the humbleness of heart -109), it

appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī that being in tears while reciting the Qur'ān stands as a highly recommended and reward worthy act (*mustaḥabb*). Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'a person who wept in fear of Allah shall not go to Hell until milk is returned to the udder after having been milked. (It means, as it is not possible to put milk once milked back into the udder, very similarly, it is also not possible that a person who weeps in fear of Allah were to go to Hell). And says another report, 'Allah Ta'ālā has forbidden the fire of Hell on two eyes - the eye that weeps in fear of Allah, and the eye that stays awake at nights guarding the Islamic frontiers. (Baihaqī, and Ḥākim). And Sayyidnā Naḍr ibn Sa'd ﷺ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'a people, among whom there is someone who weeps in fear of Allah, will be delivered from the fire of Hell because of him.' (Rūḥ al- Ma'ānī from Tirmidhī)

The reason for the big trouble Muslims are in today is no other but that there are very few left among them who would weep fearing Allah. After reporting the Aḥādīth showing the merits of weeping in fear of Allah at this point, the author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī says: وَينبغى ان يكون ذٰلك حال العلماء (And that is the state the 'Ulamā' should be in) - because, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and others have quoted the following saying of 'Abd al-A'lā Taimī:

'A person who has received the kind of knowledge that does not make him cry [because of having realized the reality of things] should be enough to make you understand that he has not been given the knowledge that brings benefits.'

Verses 110 - 111

قُلِ ادْعُوا اللّٰهَ اَوِ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمٰنَ ؕ اَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُوْا فَلَهُ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى ۚ
وَلَا تَجْهَرْ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿١١٠﴾
وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَّلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ شَرِيْكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ وَلِيٌّ مِّنَ الذُّلِّ وَكَبِّرْهُ تَكْبِيْرًا ﴿١١١﴾ ع

Say, "Call (Him by the name of) Allah or Ar-Raḥmān, in whichever way you call, His are the best names." And do

not be (too) loud in your Ṣalāh nor be (too) low in it, and seek a way in between. [110]

And say, "Praise belongs to Allah who has neither taken to Him a son, nor is there any partner to Him in His kingdom, nor is anyone (needed) to protect Him because of (any) weakness. And proclaim His greatness, an open proclamation. [111]

Commentary

These are the last verses of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (Al-'Isrā'). The Sūrah began with a declaration of the purity and oneness of Allah Ta'ālā, and this is how it is being concluded. The revelation of these verses was based on some events. The first one came to pass on a certain day when the Holy Prophet ﷺ, during his supplication, said *'Yā Allah'* and *'Yā Raḥmān.'* The Mushriks thought that he was calling two Gods. They said, 'he forbids us to call anyone else other than the One while he himself calls two deities.' The answer to this comment was given in the first part of the verse by saying that the most exalted Allah does not have a mere two names. He has many more names and all of them are the best of names. Call Him by any of these and it means the One and Only Allah. So, it was made clear that their apprehensions on that count were wrong.

As for the second incident, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ would recite the Qur'ān loudly during Ṣalāh, the Mushriks made fun of him and passed audacious remarks berating the Qur'ān, archangel Jibra'īl, even Allah Ta'ālā. In response to that, the last part of this very verse was revealed where he has been advised to take to a middle course between the loud and the low, as the average voice took care of the functional necessity. And as for the opportunity the Mushriks had to cause pain to them over the loud pitch of the voice, they would be relieved of that too.

The third problem was that the Jews and Christians proposed children for Allah Ta'ālā and the pagan Arabs said that idols were partners of Allah. The Sābians and the Māgians used to hold that not being particularly close to Allah amounted to a personal loss of worth and honor. In answer to these three religious groups, the last verse was revealed where their three notions have been refuted.

It will be noted that, in this world, the one from whom strength and

support is received is sometimes younger than one, like children, and sometimes an equal, like a partner, and sometimes older than one, like a supporter and helper. Here, in this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has refuted all three in the same order.

Ruling

The etiquette of recitation in Ṣalāh as given in verse 110 is that it should not be in a voice raised very high, nor should it be in a voice so lowered that those standing behind in the congregation cannot hear it. This injunction, as obvious, is particular with prayers wherein the recitation is voiced. As for the prayers of Ẓuhr and 'Aṣr, the recitation therein is totally unvoiced as proved from uninterrupted Sunnah.

In prayers with voiced recitation, included there are the Farḍ of Maghrib, 'Ishā' and Fajr, as well as the prayer of Tahajjud - as in a Ḥadīth which says: Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ at the time of Tahajjud. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr was reciting in a lowered voice while Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ was reciting in a loud voice. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, 'why would you recite in such a lowered voice?' Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said, 'the One I wanted to talk to in secret, Him I have made to hear, because Allah Ta'ālā hears every voice, even the lowest of the low.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'recite somewhat loudly.' Then he said to Sayyidnā 'Umar, 'why do you recite in such a loud voice?' Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ said, 'I recite loudly to wake up the drowsy, and satan.' He ordered him too, 'you should recite in a voice somewhat lowered.' (Tirmidhī as quoted Maẓharī)

Problems and their solutions relating to the loud or lowered rendering of the recitation of the Qur'ān in Ṣalāh, or on occasions other than it, have been already explained in Sūrah al-A'rāf (see commentary under Verse 55, Volume III). About the last verse beginning with: قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ (say, '*alḥamdulillāh*: praise belongs to Allah'), the Ḥadīth says that this is the '*āyah*' (verse) of '*'izzah*' (power and glory). [The reference is to the efficacy of the verse in seeking the help of Allah to overcome weaknesses and difficulties]. (Reported by Aḥmad and at-Ṭabarānī on the authority of Sayyidnā Mu'ādh al-Juhaniyy as in Maẓharī) This verse also provides an essential guidance. The drive of the meaning is that it does not matter how much one devotes to the worship of Allah, one is still obligated to take his or her deed

to be deficient as compared with His due right and confess to the likely shortfall in performing it. (Maẓharī)

And Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ has said that a child from the tribe of Banī 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, when able to say meaningful words, was taught to recite this verse by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then he recited the verse:

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْ لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَّلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ شَرِيْكٌ فِى الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ وَلِىٌّ مِّنَ الذُّلِّ وَكَبِّرْهُ تَكْبِيْرًا ـ(١٧:١١١)

And say, "Praise belongs to Allah who has neither taken to Him a son, nor is there any partner to Him in His kingdom, nor is anyone [needed] to protect Him because of [any] weakness. And proclaim His greatness, an open proclamation" - 111). (Maẓharī)

And Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ has said that once he went out with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, in a manner that his hand was in Holy Prophet's hands. He passed by a person who was disheveled and worried. He asked, 'what brought you to this condition?' That person said, 'sickness and poverty have done this to me.' He said, 'I am going to tell you a few words. If you recite these, your sickness and poverty will go away. The words were:

تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِىْ لَا يَمُوْتُ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْ لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَّلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ شَرِيْكٌ فِى الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ وَلِىٌّ مِّنَ الذُّلِّ وَكَبِّرْهُ تَكْبِيْرًا ـ

I place my trust in the Ever Living who is not to die. Praise belongs to Allah who has neither taken to Him a son, nor is there any partner to Him in His kingdom, nor is anyone (needed) to protect Him because of (any) weakness. And proclaim His greatness, an open proclamation. (17:111)

After the passage of some time, when he went that way, he found his condition good and showed his pleasure about it. That person told him, 'since the time you taught me these words, I recite them punctually.' (Abū Ya'lā and Ibn al-Sunnī, as quoted by Maẓharī)

The Tafsīr of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl ends here

With the help of Allah

After al-'Ishā', Jumāda I, 1390 Hijrah

Praised be Allah, from the beginning to the end.

A personal postscript by the author

... While writing these lines, this humble servant of Allah has completed full seventy five years of his age on 21 Sha'bān, 1390 Hijrah. Year seventy-six opens amidst diseases of different kinds including the natural weakness that sets in at this age. Then there is the mass of things to do and problems to resolve. Who can look forward to the task of writing beyond this point for it would be hoping against hope. But, when it comes to the service of the Qur'ān things become different. When someone does something in the name of the Qur'ān, no matter how insignificant, it becomes for a servant of Allah a matter of good fortune and honour. This thought led me to begin the Tafsīr of Sūrah al-Kahf with the name of Allah. The idea was to take whatever it was possible to do during the years of life left as sufficient and good enough, because the purpose is not to finish the Qur'ān, the purpose is to consume one's years and energy into the Qur'ān. And Allah is the giver of ability and the helper of the effort made in His way.

(Abridged from the detailed note)

End of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl

Sūrah Al-Kahf

(The Cave)

Sūrah al-Kahf is Makki. It has 110 verses and 12 sections

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

With the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْٓ اَنْزَلَ عَلٰى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتٰبَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ عِوَجًا ﴿١﴾
قَيِّمًا لِّيُنْذِرَ بَاْسًا شَدِيْدًا مِّنْ لَّدُنْهُ وَيُبَشِّرَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ
الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا حَسَنًا ﴿٢﴾ مَّاكِثِيْنَ فِيْهِ اَبَدًا ﴿٣﴾ وَّيُنْذِرَ الَّذِيْنَ
قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا ﴿٤﴾ مَالَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ عِلْمٍ وَّلَا لِاٰبَآئِهِمْ كَبُرَتْ
كَلِمَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ اَفْوَاهِهِمْ اِنْ يَّقُوْلُوْنَ اِلَّا كَذِبًا ﴿٥﴾ فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ
نَّفْسَكَ عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمْ اِنْ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ اَسَفًا ﴿٦﴾ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا
مَا عَلَى الْاَرْضِ زِيْنَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ اَيُّهُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ﴿٧﴾ وَاِنَّا
لَجٰعِلُوْنَ مَا عَلَيْهَا صَعِيْدًا جُرُزًا ﴿٨﴾

Praise belongs to Allah who has sent down to His servant the Book and allowed no crookedness in it, [1] **a straightforward Book to warn of a severe punishment from Him, and to give glad tidings to the believers who do righteous deeds that they will have a good reward (Paradise)** [2] **where they will dwell for ever,** [3] **and to warn those who have said that Allah has taken to Himself a son,** [4] **while they have no knowledge of it, nor had their fathers. Grave is the word that comes out of their mouths. They say nothing but a lie.** [5]

So, perhaps you are going to kill yourself after them out of grief if they do not believe in this message. [6]

Surely, We have made what is on earth an adornment for it so that We test them as to who among them is better in deed. [7] **And surely, We are going to turn what is thereon into a barren land.** [8]

The properties and merits of Sūrah al-Kahf

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' ﷺ appearing in Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī and the Musnad of Aḥmad, one who has memorized the first ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will remain protected from the ill effects of Dajjāl (imposter). In another report in the same books and from the same authority, the same thing has been said about having memorized the last ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf.

And it has been reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Mu'ādh ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "One who recites the first and the last verses of Sūrah al-Kahf, for him there is light from his feet up to his head. And the one who were to recite the whole Sūrah, then, for him there is light from the earth up to the sky."

And it appears in some narratives that a person who recites Sūrah al-Kahf on the day of Jumu'ah will have light from his feet up to the sky. This light will serve him well on the day of Qiyāmah, and every sin committed by him between the past and the present Jumu'ah will be forgiven." (Imām Ibn Kathīr has declared this report to be *mawqūf* (a Ḥadīth the narration of which stops at a Ṣaḥābī and does not ascend to the Holy Prophet ﷺ).

And Ḥāfiẓ Zya' al-Maqdisī, in his book Al-Mukhtārah, has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "One who recites Sūrah al-Kahf on the day of Jumu'ah will remain protected from every *fitnah.* And if Dajjāl appears, he will stay safe against the trying challenges released by him as well." (All these narrative reports have been taken from Tafsīr ibn Kathīr)

According to a report from Dailamī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ appearing in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The entire Sūrah al-Kahf was revealed at one time and seventy thousand angels came with it" - which shows its majesty.

The cause of revelation

Imām ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn

'Abbās ﵄ that the Quraysh of Makkah (disturbed by the rising influence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a prophet) sent two of their men, Naḍr ibn Ḥārith and 'Uqbah ibn Abī Mu'ayṭ, to the Jewish scholars of Madīnah. Their mission was to find out what they said about him as they were learned in past scriptures of the Torah and Injīl. The Jewish scholars told them, "put three questions before him. If he answers these correctly,* you should know that he is a prophet and messenger of Allah, and if he fails to do that, you should know that he is a pretender and not a messenger. Firstly, ask him about the young men who had left their city in the distant past and what had happened to them, for this is a unique event. Secondly, ask him about the person who had traveled through the East and West of the Earth and what had happened to him. Thirdly, ask him about the Rūḥ (soul, spirit) as to what it was?"

The two Quraysh emissaries returned to Makkah al-Mukarramah, informed their tribesmen that they had come back with a decisive plan of action and told them all about their encounter with the Jewish scholars of Madīnah. Then, these people took these questions to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He heard the questions and said that he will answer them tomorrow. But, he forgot to say *'insha'Allah'* at that time. These people went back and the Holy Prophet ﷺ kept waiting for the Divine revelation in the hope that he will be told about answers to these questions through *waḥy*. But, no *waḥy* came until the next day as promised. In fact, fifteen days went by and things stood as they were, neither did Sayyidnā Jibra'īl come nor did the revelation. The Quraysh of Makkah started throwing taunts which caused real pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

After fifteen days, came angel Jibra'īl with Sūrah al-Kahf (wherein the delay caused has also been explained by saying that one should say *'insha'Allah'* when promising to do something in the future. Since, this was not done in the event concerned, therefore, revelation was delayed as a measure of reminder. In this Sūrah, verses relating to this matter such as: وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَاىْءٍ اِنِّى فَاعِلٌ ذٰلِكَ غَدًا اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ (18:23,24) will be appearing later). Also related in this Sūrah there was the event about the young

* That is, he gives the answer he should give (and his correct answer to the question about 'Rūḥ' will be that Allah Ta'ālā knows its reality best). So, this report which appears in Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, p. 191, v. 15 is not contrary to the report which has appeared on pages 544-47 of this volume under the commentary on verse 85 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl - **Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī.**

men known as Aṣḥāb al-Kahf or the People of the Cave, and the event concerning the travel of Dhul-Qarnain from the East to the West. Also included therein was the answer to the question asked about 'Rūḥ' (Qurṭubī and Maẓharī with reference to Ibn Jarīr). But, answering the question about Rūḥ (soul, spirit) briefly was as dictated by wisdom. This was taken up separately at the end of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (17:85) and this is the reason why Sūrah al-Kahf has been placed after Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl [al-Isrā'] - as mentioned by Al-Suyuṭī.

Commentary

The word: عِوَج (*'iwaj*) in: وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ عِوَجًا قَيِّمًا (and allowed no crookedness in it - 1) means crookedness of any kind, or inclination towards one side or deviation from the norms of rectitude. The Holy Qur'ān remains pure and free of all that in terms of the perfection of its words and meanings. It simply admits of no distortion anywhere, either in eloquence or in knowledge and wisdom. The sense which has been conveyed in a negative or eliminative form through: وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ عِوَجًا (and allowed no crookedness in it) has been fortified positively through the word: قَيِّمًا (*qayyimā*) which follows immediately for emphasis. The reason is that this word carries the sense of: مُسْتَقِيْمًا (*mustaqīmā*) and that which is: مستقيم (*mustaqīm*: straightforward, straight, upright) will not have the least crookedness or tilt towards any side. However, قَيِّم (*qayyim*) can also have another sense, that of caretaker, custodian and protector. Given this probability, the sense of the expression would be that the Qur'ān, while perfect in itself as free from all kinds of excess, deficiency and crookedness, keeps others upright, firm and unflinching and protects the interests and advantages of all servants of Allah. Thus the gist of the two expressions would be that the Holy Qur'ān stands perfect in itself and has the ability to make men and women created by Allah become equally perfect. (Maẓharī)

It was said in verse 7: اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْاَرْضِ زِيْنَةً لَّهَا (Surely, We have made what is on earth an adornment for it) with reference to all living forms, vegetation, mountains, minerals and everything else present on the earth. They are its embellishment. That there are snakes, scorpions, beasts and many harmful and fatal things may lead someone to doubt as to how can they be called 'an adornment for it.' This doubt is unfounded because everything in this world considered harmful, fatal or plain bad

may be so in a restricted sense but, in terms of the totality of creation, nothing is bad. Everything, no matter how bad, has been invested with many benefits by Allah Ta'ālā on other counts. The medical use of poisonous and fatal life forms in the interest of human beings is an example. Therefore, things that are considered even bad are not that bad in terms of the function of this entire universe.

Verses 9 - 12

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحٰبَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيْمِ كَانُوْا مِنْ اٰيٰتِنَا عَجَبًا ﴿٩﴾ إِذْ
أَوَى الْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَآ اٰتِنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَّهَيِّئْ لَنَا
مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا ﴿١٠﴾ فَضَرَبْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِيْنَ عَدَدًا
﴿١١﴾ ثُمَّ بَعَثْنٰهُمْ لِنَعْلَمَ أَيُّ الْحِزْبَيْنِ أَحْصٰى لِمَا لَبِثُوْٓا أَمَدًا ﴿١٢﴾

Do you think that the People of Kahf (the Cave) and Raqīm (inscription*) were unusual out of Our signs? [9]

When the young men took refuge in the Cave and said, "Our Lord, bless us with mercy from Your own and provide us with guidance in our matters." [10] **So, We veiled their hearing (putting them to sleep) in the Cave for a number of years.** [11] **Thereafter We raised them up, so that We know which of the two groups had best calculated the period they remained (sleeping).** [12]

Lexical Explanation

Kahf is a large mountainous cave or cavern. If not large, it will be a *ghār*. The word: الرَّقِيْم (*al-raqīm*) literally denotes: المرقوم (*al-marqūm*) that is, something written. What does it mean at this place? The sayings of commentators differ about it. Ḍaḥḥāk, Sudiyy and Ibn Jubayr following the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ declare it to mean a written tablet on which the ruler of the time had inscribed the names of the People of Kahf and had it fixed on the entrance to the Cave. For this reason, the People of Kahf are also called the People of al-Raqīm (the inscribed ones). Qatādah, 'Aṭiyyah, 'Awfī and Mujāhid have said that Raqīm is the name of the valley adjoining the mountain in which the hol-

* The word Raqīm has been interpreted differently. Most of the commentators have preferred 'inscription' while others have taken it to be a mountain, a valley or a specific town.

low cavern of the People of Kahf was located. Some others have identified this mountain itself as the Raqīm. 'Ikrimah رحمه الله تعالى says, "I have heard Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās ﷺ saying - I do not know whether Raqīm is the name of some inscribed tablet or some town." Ka'b al-Aḥbār and Wahb ibn Munabbih report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās that Raqīm is the name of a town near Ailah, that is, 'Aqabah, situated in the kingdom of the Romans.

Fityah (فِتْيَة) in verse 10 is the plural of: فَتًى :*fatā*, which means a young man.

The expression: فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَىٰ اٰذَانِهِمْ (translated as 'so, We veiled their hearing [putting them to sleep]' - 11) literally means to plug ears to prevent someone from hearing. It is used to convey the sense of deep sleep. When sleeping, eyes close first but ears remain active. Sounds are heard. When sleep takes over completely, ears stop functioning. Later, when awake, ears resume their function first for sound startles the person sleeping who then comes out of his sleep.

Commentary

The story of the People of Kahf and Raqīm

There are a few subjects of study in this story. First of all, it needs to be determined whether People of Kahf and People of Raqīm are two names of the same group, or these are two separate groups. Though, no clarification of this appears in any Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, but Imām al-Bukhārī, in his Ṣaḥīḥ, has given two separate chapter headings - Aṣḥāb al-Kahf and Aṣḥāb al-Raqīm. Then, under Aṣḥāb al-Raqīm, he mentions the well-known story of three persons being locked shut into a cave with no way out, which opened later through prayers, and which is there in details in all books of Ḥadīth. From this innovative device of Imām al-Bukhārī, it is gathered that, according to him, the People of Kahf are one group, and the appellation of the People of Raqīm has been used for those three persons who had taken shelter in the cave at some earlier time. Then a huge rock from the mountain fell on the entrance to the cave and blocked it totally, making it impossible for them to come out. At that moment, it was with reference to whatever righteous deeds they each had done in life that the three of them supplicated before Allah: Our Lord, if we had done this thing for Your good pleasure, please open the passage for us. Following the prayer of the first person, the rock

moved a little and light started coming in. By the prayer of the second one, it moved a little more. Then, by the prayer of the third one, the passage opened up fully.

But, Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar has made it clear in Sharḥ al-Bukhārī that, in the light of Ḥadīth reports, there is no clear-cut proof about the People of Raqīm being the name for the three persons referred to above. What has happened here is that some narrators have added to the report of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ﷺ, a reporter of the incident of the cave, by saying that Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ﷺ while mentioning the story of the cave said, 'I heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioning Raqīm. He was relating the story of the three who got shut into the cave.' This addition appears in the report of al-Bazzār and al-Ṭabarānī as quoted by Fatḥ-al-Bārī. But, to begin with, none of the reports from the usual narrators of this Ḥadīth which are available in details in the six Ṣaḥīḥs and other books of Ḥadīth have included this sentence of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ﷺ. Even the report of al-Bukhārī itself does not have this sentence in it. Then, even within this sentence, it has not been made clear whether or not the Holy Prophet ﷺ had called those three persons who got shut into the cave by the name of the People of Raqīm. In fact, the words are: 'he was mentioning Raqīm.' Those three were mentioned as a corollary to this statement. As for the difference in the sayings of the Ṣaḥābah, Tābi'īn and commentators in general concerning the meaning of Raqīm, it is by itself a proof that there was no Ḥadīth reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the meaning of Raqīm as determined by him. Otherwise, how was it possible that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself determines the meaning of a word, the Ṣaḥābah, Tābi'īn and other commentators opt for some other saying contrary to it? Therefore, Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar, the commentator of al-Bukhārī, denies that the People of Kahf and the People of Raqīm are two separate groups. According to him, the correct position is that both these names apply to one single group. The mention of three persons getting shut into a cave could have been made with the mention of Raqīm. It does not necessarily follow from it that these very three persons were 'the Aṣḥāb al-Raqīm' (the People of Raqīm).

Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar has also clarified at this place that the very context of the story of the People of Kahf as described by the Qur'ān tells us that

the People of Kahf and Raqīm are but one group. This is why the majority of commentators and Ḥadīth experts agree that they both are one and the same.

The second issue to be determined here is that of the details of the story. It has two parts. Part one is the spirit of the story, and the real objective. It provides an answer to the question asked by the Jews, and guidance and good counsel for Muslims as well. The second part deals with the historical and geographical aspects of the story. As for the delineation of the objective, it plays no role there, for instance: When and where did this event come to pass, who was the infidel king these people ran from and hid in the cave? What were his beliefs, what did he actually do to them because of which they were compelled to run and hide in the cave? How many were they? Exactly how long did they remain asleep? Are they still alive or are they dead?

The Holy Qur'ān, under its wise principles and unique methodology, has not related any story in all its detail and order throughout the Qur'ān (with the sole exception of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ) - a common method used in books of history. Instead, it has introduced only a part of each story that was appropriate to the occasion and was particularly related to guiding and teaching human beings. (The reason for excluding the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ from the parameter of this method appears in the Tafsīr of Sūrah Yūsuf included in Volume V, pages 24, 25)

The same method was used in relating the story of the People of Kahf. Here, the Qur'ān has described its particular parts that were relevant to the real objective. No mention was made of the remaining parts that were purely historical or geographical. Of course, mention was made of the number of the People of Kahf. The questions regarding the period of time they remained asleep were certainly alluded to, even an indication was released towards the answer but, along with it, an instruction was also given that it was not appropriate to investigate and debate such issues. These should be entrusted with Allah Ta'ālā. This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ who was duty-bound to explain the meanings of the Holy Qur'ān never related those parts of the story in any Ḥadīth. It is on the grounds of this Qur'ānic methodology that great men among the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn have declared the essential policy guideline in such matters by saying:

أَبْهِمُوْا مَا أَبْهَمَهُ اللّٰهُ (الاتقان للسيوطى)

What Allah has left undetermined, you too leave it undetermined. (al-Itqān li-Suyuṭī)

This approach and conduct of leading Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn required that, in this Tafsīr too, those parts of the story should be ignored as ignored by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. But, this is a time when historical and geographical breakthroughs are taken as great achievements. Therefore, later day scholars of Tafsīr have described those parts as well in varying lengths. As far as Tafsīr Ma'āriful-Qur'ān is concerned, the parts of the story that have already been mentioned in the Qur'ān will be covered under the explanation of its verses. The remaining historical and geographical parts of the story are being described here within the limits of their need. However, the truth of the matter is that, even after this description, the end result will remain the same - that is, it is impossible to arrive at a categorical decision in these matters. The reason is that writings in Islamic, and then Christian history, relating to this subject are so different, even contradictory, that one writer determines something in the light of his investigation, opinion and evidence while the other prefers something else.

Events relating to hiding in caves to protect faith have been many and widespread

One major reason for differences existing among historians lies in the great importance attached to monasticism by adherents to the faith brought by Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. As a result, there were several instances spread around different regions and countries of the world where some people took shelter in caves to devote themselves to the worship of Allah Ta'ālā living there for the rest of their lives. Now, where so ever some such event has occurred, it was not so far out for a historian to suspect it to be that of the People of Kahf.

People of Kahf: Place and Period

Tafsīr authority al-Qurṭubī of al-Andulus (Spain) has reported some events at this juncture in his Tafsīr. Some of these events, that belong to different cities, he had heard or seen himself. First of all, he says on the basis of a report from Ḍaḥḥāk that al-Raqīm is the name of a town in Rūm (the Greco-Roman territory) where twenty-one men are lying in a

cave as if they are sleeping. Then, he reports from Tafsīr authority, Ibn 'Aṭiyyah that he had heard from many people that there was a cave in Shām (Syria) which had some dead bodies in it. Attendants said that they were the ones called the People of Kahf. And adjacent to the cave, there was the structure of a mosque and residential house called Raqīm. In addition to the dead bodies, the skeleton of a dead dog was also present there.

Then, al-Qurṭubī writes about another event relating to al-Gharnāṭah (Granada) in al-Andulus (Spain), again reporting from Ibn 'Aṭiyyah who says, 'there is a cave in Lawshah (Lojah), a village outside al-Gharnāṭah. It has some dead bodies and along with these there is the skeleton of a dead dog as well. Most of the dead bodies have no flesh left reducing them to bare skeletons. However, some do have signs of flesh and skin still being there. Centuries have passed over this. But, nothing is known about them authentically. Some people say that they were the People of Kahf. Ibn 'Aṭiyyah further says, 'when I heard this news, I personally went there in the Hijrah year 504. On arrival there, I really found those bodies in the same state. Close by there is a mosque and a structure of the Roman period called Raqīm. It seems to have been some palace from the remains of several walls still there. This thing is located in an unpopulated area with wild growth around. He also said, 'remains of an old city are found in the area characterized by higher altitudes in al-Gharnāṭah. It is Roman in style. The name of the city is said to be Raqyus. We have seen many graves and strange things in its ruins.' From what has been said here it will be realized that al-Qurṭubī who lived in Spain avoids calling anyone as the People of Kahf definitely, despite that he has described these events as reported. Then, there is the case of Ibn 'Aṭiyyah who, despite his personal observation, did not claim that they were the People of Kahf. He rather limits himself to reporting what was popular. But, Abū Ḥayyān, the seventh century commentator from al-Andulus (Spain) was born in al-Gharnāṭah itself in Hijrah year 654. There he was raised and there he lived. He too mentions the cave of al-Gharnāṭah in his Tafsīr, al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, very much like al-Qurṭubī has done. After having written about the eye witness account of Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, he says, 'when I was in al-Andulus (that is, before shifting to Cairo), many people went to see this cave. They used to say that, despite

that those bodies are still there and the visitors do count them out but, somehow, they always make a mistake in giving their correct number.' After that he said, 'as for the city of Raqyus mentioned by Ibn 'Aṭiyyah which is located on the side of al-Gharnāṭah that faces the Qiblah, I have myself passed by it so many times and I have seen unusually large rocks in it.' After that, he says: " ويترجح كون اهل الكهف بالاندلس لكثرة دين النصارٰى بها حتّٰى هى بلاد مملكتهم العظمٰى " (one reason for preferring the possibility of the People of Kahf being in al-Andulus could be that it is predominantly Christian to the extent that this particular region is their largest religious center - Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 102, v. 6).

Tafsīr authority Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Abī Ḥātim following a report of 'Awfī from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ say that Raqīm is the name of a valley which is located near Ailah ('Aqabah) south of Palestine. And the two of them along with other Ḥadīth experts also report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that he said, 'I do not know what Raqīm is. But, when I asked Ka'b al-Aḥbār, he said that Raqīm is the name of the town where the People of the Kahf lived before going into the Cave.' (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Ibn Abī Shaibah, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim report Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ to have said, 'we waged a Jihād against Byzantine forces in the company of Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah ﷺ which is known as the battle of al-Maḍīq (المضيق). On this trip, we passed through the site of the Cave of the People of Kahf. The Qur'ān mentions it. Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah wanted to go into the cave and see the bodies of the People of Kahf. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās said, 'let us not do so because Allah Ta'ālā has already prohibited someone better than you from seeing them, that is, the Rasūl of Allah. Is it not that Allah says in the Qur'ān: لَوِاطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَّلَمُلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ رُعْبًا (If you had a look at them, you would have fled away from them and would have been filled with awe of them - 18)? But, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah did not accept this suggestion of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās perhaps for the reason that the state in which they were portrayed by the Qur'ān related to the time when they were alive and it was not necessary that they would still be found in the same state. Therefore, a few men were sent to have a look at them. They reached the cave. But, when they wanted to enter into the cave, Allah Ta'ālā sent a punishing wind upon them that turned all of them out and away from the cave. (Rūḥ

al-Ma'ānī p. 227, v. 15)

The reports and narratives appearing above establish that commentators have given three locations for the site of the Cave of the People of Kahf. Firstly, in Ailah near 'Aqabah on the shore of the Gulf of 'Aqabah. Most of the narrations from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās favor this interpretation.

From the personal observation of Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, and Abū Ḥayyān's support, it seems likely that this cave is in al-Gharnāṭah, al-Andulus (Spain). Out of these two places, the name of a city or particular building has also been given as Raqīm. Similarly, the name of the great structure in ruins close to the cave in al-Gharnāṭah has been cited as Raqīm. Then, none of the two kinds of reports decisively say that this cave was The Cave of the People of Kahf. Both rely on popular local talk and oral tradition. As for the old name of the city where the People of Kahf lived, it has been mentioned as Ifsūs (Ephesus as in the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians - Holy Bible, p. 239), with Ṭarsūs as its Islamic name, in nearly all Tafsīr reports of al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān and Ibn Jarīr. That this city was located on the western coast of Asia Minor is a fact accepted by historians. This shows that the Cave is also within Asia Minor. Therefore, there is no proof to declare any one of these as true and the rest as false. As for probability, all three are probable. In fact, no one can deny the very probability that the events relating to these caves, despite being true, may not be relevant to the Cave of the People of Kahf that has been mentioned in the Qur'ān. May be, it is somewhere else. And it is also not necessary that Raqīm at this place may exclusively be the name of some city or building. In fact, no one can reject even the probability that Raqīm denotes the inscription engraved with the names of the People of Kahf on a tablet and placed on the entrance to the cave by some king.

Investigations of Modern Historians

Some contemporary historians have made considerable efforts to determine the place and time of the Cave of the People of Kahf with the help of Christian and European historical accounts.

Abūl-Kalām Āzād has declared the present city of Petra near Ailah ('Aqabah) - Arabicized by Arab historians as Baṭrā - as the old city of Raqīm. With reference to current historical accounts, he reports the rem-

nants of a cave in the mountain and of some mosque adjacent to it. In confirmation, he refers to the Book of Joshua in the Old Testament (18:27) where the place has been mentioned as Raqm or Raqīm. According to him, this is the place now called Petra. But, this has been considered doubtful as the reference to Raqm or Raqīm in the Book of Joshua is connected with the inheritance of Banī bin Yamin (Benyamin). Then, this territory was located west of River Jordan and the Dead Sea where the city of Petra could have not possibly been located. Therefore, contemporary archaeologists are very reluctant in accepting Petra and Raqīm as one and the same. (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1946, v. 17, p. 658)

Commentators in general have pointed out to the city of Ifsūs, a major Byzantine city on the western coast of Asia Minor the remains of which are still found twenty or twenty five miles south of the modern Turkish city of Izmīr (Samarna).

Maulanā Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī while mentioning the city of Petra in his book, Arḍ al-Qur'ān, has put Raqīm in parenthesis. But, he has not given any evidence in support of the proposition that the old name of the city of Petra was Raqīm. Maulanā Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān Sihwārwī has also adopted this view. For evidence, he refers to Torah: The book of Numbers and the book of Isaiah and gives the name of Petra as Raqīmah. (Dā'irah al-Ma'ārif al-'Arabiyah)

When a cave was discovered in a desolate jungle area close to 'Ammān in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Archaeological Department of the Government started digging operations on that site in the year 1963. After having removed the upper strata of topsoil and rocks, they found six coffins filled with bones and stones, and two graves. Towards the south side of the cave, they found inscriptions on rocks in Byzantian script. Local people think that this is the place called Raqīm close to which is this cave of the People of Kahf. Allah knows best.

My revered teacher and master, Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavī, relying on Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī, has reported the following historical account of the place and time of the People of Kahf. According to this account, when the People of Kahf had escaped the tyranny of the king of the time and taken shelter in the cave, the time was the year 250 A.D. Then they remained asleep for three hundred years. Thus, it comes to a total of 550

A.D. And the Holy Prophet ﷺ was born in 570 A.D. Therefore, this event of their wakening occurred twenty years before the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, in Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī as well, their locale has been determined as the city of Ifsūs or Ṭarsūs that used to be in Asia Minor. Its ruins still remain. And Allah knows best the reality of it.

These historical and geographical details have been given here from the reports of classical commentators, then from contemporary historians. This humble writer had already submitted that neither does the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān depend on these, nor does any essential part of the objective for which the Qur'ān has related this story belongs thereto. Then, relevant reports and stories and their indicators and connections are so different that, despite all investigations and efforts, it is just not possible to take any categorical decision in this matter. Having preferences and inclinations is all that is left to do here. But, in our time, educated people have acquired an increased taste in historical investigations. It is for this satisfaction that these details have been reported for they, by way of introduction and hypothesis, tell us at least this much that this event came to pass after Sayyidnā 'Isa عليه السلام close to the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. And that most reports seem to agree on this being near the city of Ifsūs or Ṭarsūs. Even then, Allah knows best. And the truth is that we, after all these investigations, are standing where we had started from - that there is no need to fix an exact location, nor can this be fixed with any certain modality. The Tafsīr and Ḥadīth authority, Ibn Kathīr has said exactly this about it:

قَدْ اَخبَرَنَا اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰی بِذٰلِكَ وَاَرَادَ مِنَّا فَهمَه' وَتَدَبُّرَه' وَ لَمْ يُخبِرْنَا بِمَكَانِ هٰذَا الْكَهْفِ
فِیْ اَیِّ الْبِلَادِ مِنَ الْاَرْضِ اِذْلَا فَائِدَةَ لَنَا فِيْهِ وَلَا قَصْدٌ شَرْعِیٌّ

Allah Ta'ālā has already told us about that. And He expects us to understand it and deliberate into it. And He did not tell us about the location of this Cave in a particular city out of this earth because there is nothing beneficial for us in it nor does any religious objective hinge upon it - Ibn Kathīr, v. 3, p. 75.

When did the event relating to the People of Kahf come to pass and why did they take shelter in the Cave?

This segment of the story is also the same upon which neither does the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān depend, nor does it influence the objective of the story in any significant way, nor do the Qur'ān

and Sunnah make any statement about it. What we have here is no more than historical stories. Therefore, in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Commentator Abū Ḥayyān has said:

وَالرُّوَاةُ مُخْتَلِفُوْنَ فِىْ قِصَصِهِمْ وَكَيْفَ كَانَ اِجْتِمَاعُهُمْ وَ خُرُوْجُهُمْ وَلَمْ يَاْتِ فِى الْحَدِيْثِ الصَّحِيْحِ كَيْفِيَّةُ ذٰلِكَ وَلاَ فِى الْقُرْاٰنِ ۔

> And narrators differ in stories about them, and about how they got together and moved out, and the mode and manner of that has neither been mentioned in any authentic Ḥadīth nor in the Qur'ān - al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 101, v. 6.

However, when we provided some information about the site of the remnants of the People of Kahf a little earlier, it was in consideration of the curiosity of contemporary temperament. For the same reason, we are providing here brief notes of information regarding the period and causes of the passing of this event from exegetic and historical reports. As for a detailed and comprehensive description of this story, the respected scholar, Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh Pānīpatī has reported it on the authority of different narratives in his Tafsīr Maẓharī. But, given here is a brief version of the event that Ibn Kathīr has presented with reference to many early and later commentators. He says:

"The Aṣḥāb al-Kahf were the progeny of kings and chiefs among their people who were idol-worshippers. Once their people went out of the town to participate in some religious festival of theirs. This was a place where they met every year, worshipped their idols and sacrificed animals to please them. Their king was a tyrant. Called Daqyānūs, he used to force his people to worship idols. That year, when everyone had gathered together in this festival, these young men identified as the Aṣḥāb al-Kahf also reached there and saw their people taking rocks carved with their own hands as God, worshipping them and sacrificing for them. At that time, Allah Ta'ālā blessed them with the good sense to shun this absurd practice of their people. Thus, when they used their reason, they arrived at the conclusion that this worship belongs to none but that supreme Power who has created the heavens and the earth and everything therein. This thought crossed the minds of those few young men simultaneously and they started moving away from there to avoid the absurd practice of their people in the fair name of worship. The first young man who withdrew went far from the crowd and sat down under a

tree. After that, came another and he too sat there. Similarly, came the third, and the fourth, and each one of them kept taking a seat under the tree. But, none of them were familiar with each other, nor did they know as to why they had come there. The truth of the matter is that they were brought together on that spot by the Power that lit the light of faith in their hearts."

The real foundation of nationalism and collectivism

After having transmitted that, Ibn Kathīr comments that people tend to take nationalism and common race as the cause of cohesion and union in social life. But, the reality lies in what has been said in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, that unity or disunity first germinates in souls, then it affects the bodies in this world. Souls that have experienced congruity and unity among them in *'azal* (eternity) go on to become mutually connected and get molded into the form of a confraternity. As for those that did not have the experience of this mutual congruity and unity - in fact, remained separated there - they will remain separated here too. Take this very event as an example and see how the same thought crossed everyone's mind separately and it was this thought that brought everyone unconsciously together.

In short, these people got together at one place all right, but everyone was concealing his belief from the other lest this person reports him to the king and he gets arrested. After having remained there all together in silence, one of them spoke out, 'brothers, there must be some reason why all of us have broken away from our people and reached here. It seems appropriate that we all should get to know each other's thoughts.' Thereupon, one person declared, 'the truth is that the faith and worship in which I found my people involved gave me the certitude that this whole thing is false. 'Ibādah or worship should be for One Allah who is most exalted in His majesty and who has no partner or associate in the act of the creation of this universe.' This broke the ice. Others were prompted to speak out and they all declared that this was the thought, the belief that separated them from their people and brought them there.

Now they were an ideologically unified group enjoying mutual fellowship and friendship. They set up a separate House of Worship for themselves where they would assemble and worship Allah who is One and

who has no partner in His divinity.

But, by and by they became the talk of the town. Backbiters told on them before the king who ordered that they all should be brought to him. When they came into the royal court, the king asked them about their belief and its mores. Allah gave them the courage to state their belief in the Oneness of Allah. In fact, they invited the king himself to believe as they did. This is precisely what has been mentioned in the verses appearing next: وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَّدْعُوَا مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلٰهًا لَّقَدْ قُلْنَا إِذًا شَطَطًا (الى قوله) كَذِبًا (And We made their hearts firm. And when they rose, they said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth; and we shall never invoke any god other than Him, for then we would be saying something far from the truth. These are people of ours. They have taken to gods other than Him. Why do they not bring a proof in their favor? So, who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah?" - al-Kahf, 18:14,15)

When these young men acted bold before the king and invited him to believe, he turned the call down and threatened them with drastic action. He had the princely robes they donned on their bodies taken off in reprisal so that they may think and change their behavior. In order that they actually do so, he gave them respite for a few days saying that they were young, therefore, he did not wish to kill them right away. In fact, he wanted them to have the time to think over it. Then, if they reverted to the faith of their people, they will be allowed to live as usual, otherwise they would be killed.

It must have been the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā on His believing servants that this respite given to them opened an escape door for them. They ran from there and took refuge in a cave.

Usual reports carried by commentators agree that these people were followers of the faith of Sayyidnā 'Isā Masīḥ عليه السلام. Ibn Kathīr and most commentators have mentioned it. However, Ibn Kathīr has not accepted it. According to him, had these people been the followers of the Christian faith, the Jews of Madīnah would have not suggested that a question be asked about them just because of their mutual hostility and thus would have not given them that importance. But, this is not a sufficient basis because of which all reports should be rejected. When the Jews of Madīn-

ah proposed that such a question should be asked, they were simply looking at it as a unique event - very similar to the question about Dhul-Qarnain which was also on that basis. That there was no Jewish-Christian prejudice involved in questions of this nature is fairly obvious here.

In Tafsīr Maẓharī, based on a report from Ibn Isḥāq, these people have been identified as monotheists who, after the decline of the original Christian faith, were among the rare remnants still adhering to the true faith of the Sayyidnā ʻĪsā عليه السلام and to pure monotheism. In this report of Ibn Isḥāq too, the name of the oppressive king has been given as Daqyānūs while the city in which these young men lived before they went into hiding in the cave has been called Ifsūs.

Then, the event has been described in the same manner in the report of Sayyidnā ʻAbdullāh ibn ʻAbbās رضي الله عنه as well and the name of the king has been given as Daqyānūs. The report of Ibn Isḥāq also adds that the name of the king of the people who were followers of the faith of Sayyidnā Masīḥ and had taken over the country at the time the Aṣḥāb al-Kahf woke up was Baidusis.

So, at least the strong likelihood of the People of Kahf being committed to the true faith brought by Sayyidnā ʻIsa Masīḥ عليه السلام stands proved from the reports as a whole, and that they belong to the post-Masīḥ period, and that the Mushrik king they ran from was called Daqyānūs. At the time they woke up after three hundred and nine years, the name of the righteous and believing king who ruled the country has been named as Baidūsīs in the report of Ibn Isḥāq. If this is seen in conjunction with the contemporary calendar, it is possible to determine their period, at the least as a matter of conjecture and approximation. Trying to determine it any more than that is needless, nor there exist the means to acquire this knowledge.

Are the People of Kahf still alive?

In this matter, the correct and obvious approach is that they have died. Tafsīr Maẓharī carries the detailed report of Ibn Isḥāq. According to this report, when the People of Kahf woke up, their unique event became the talk of the town. They went to meet the king. When they took leave of king Baidūsīs, they bid farewell to him and prayed for him. The

king was still there when they went back to the place only to lie down where they had been lying for such a long time. And that was exactly when Allah Ta'ālā sent death to them.

At this stage, the following report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has been reproduced by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr and many more from among the commentators:

قَالَ قَتَادَةُ غَزَا ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ مَعَ حَبِيْبِ بْنِ مَسْلَمَةَ فَمَرُّوْا بِكَهْفٍ فِيْ بِلَادِ الرُّوْمِ فَرَأَوْا فِيْهِ عِظَامًا فَقَالَ قَائِلٌ هٰذِهٖ عِظَامُ اَهْلِ الْكَهْفِ فَقَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ لَقَدْ بَلِيَتْ عِظَامُهُمْ مِّنْ اَكْثَرَ مِنْ ثَلٰثِمِائَةِ سَنَةٍ (ابن كثير)

Qatādah says that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ participated in a Jihād in the company of Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah when they passed by a cave in the Roman territory. There they saw bones in it. Then someone said, 'These are the bones of the People of Kahf.' Thereupon, Ibn 'Abbās said, 'The bones of them have already become dust more than three hundred years ago' - Ibn Kathīr.

These were particular segments of the story that were neither described by the Qur'ān, nor by the Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In addition to that, neither does some specified purpose of this event or the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān depend on it - nor can any categorical decision be arrived at in these matters on the basis of historical reports. As far as the remaining segments of the story already described within the text of the Qur'ān are concerned, their details appear under the commentary on relevant verses.

Up to this point, the Qur'ān had mentioned this story in brief. Details follow.

Verses 13 - 16

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَاَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ اٰمَنُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنٰهُمْ
هُدًى ﴿١٣﴾ ۖ وَّرَبَطْنَا عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ اِذْ قَامُوْا فَقَالُوْا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ لَنْ نَّدْعُوَاۡ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖۤ اِلٰهًا لَّقَدْ قُلْنَاۤ اِذًا شَطَطًا ﴿١٤﴾ هٰٓؤُلَاۤءِ
قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖۤ اٰلِهَةً ؕ لَوْلَا يَاْتُوْنَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍۭ بَيِّنٍ ؕ فَمَنْ

أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ﴿١٥﴾ وَإِذِ اعْتَزَلْتُمُوهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ
إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَأْوُا إِلَى الْكَهْفِ يَنْشُرْ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَيُهَيِّئْ لَكُمْ مِنْ
أَمْرِكُمْ مِرْفَقًا ﴿١٦﴾

We narrate to you their story with truth. They were young men who believed in their Lord and We increased, them in guidance. [13] **And We made their hearts firm and when they rose, they said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth; and we shall never invoke any god other than Him, for then we would be saying something far from the truth.** [14] **These are people of ours. They have taken to gods other than Him. Why do they not bring a clear proof in their favor? So, who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah?** [15]

And when you have turned away from them, and those they worship, except Allah, then seek refuge in the cave and your Lord will unfold His mercy for you and provide you ease in your matters." [16]

Commentary

The word: فِتيَه (*fityah*) in: إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ (They were young men - 13) is the plural of: فتى (*fatā*) which means someone young. According to Tafsīr scholars, this word indicates that the time ripe for correction of deeds and morals, and the inculcation of guidance and righteousness, is invariably the time when one is young. When old, formerly acquired deeds and morals become so deeply rooted that - no matter how evident becomes the truth against these - it is very difficult to break loose from their shackles. Those among the noble Companions who responded to and believed in the call of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were, after all, mostly young people. (Ibn Kathīr, Abū Ḥayyān)

The first sentence of verse 14: وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ (And We made their hearts firm) refers to the event described by Ibn Kathīr a little earlier. This tells us that Allah made the hearts of these people firm when the king who was cruel and worshipped idols summoned them in his court and questioned them. This was a matter of life and death. But, despite their apprehension for the worst, Allah Ta'ālā made His love, awe and grandeur prevail over their hearts which empowered them to face any

eventuality of death or distress. The outcome was that they proclaimed their belief clearly and courageously saying that they did not worship anyone or anything other than Allah and would not do that in future as well. People who firmly resolve to do something for the sake of Allah, this is how they receive help from Allah Ta'ālā.

About the verse: فَأْوٗا اِلَى الْكَهْفِ (then seek refuge in the Cave - 16), Ibn Kathīr says that the course adopted by the People of Kahf was that they left the city in which it was not possible to worship Allah and took refuge in the Cave. This is the Sunnah, the way of all prophets. They migrate from such places and opt for a place where 'Ibādah could be done.

Verses 17 - 18

وَتَرَى الشَّمْسَ اِذَا طَلَعَتْ تَّزٰوَرُ عَنْ كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِيْنِ وَاِذَا غَرَبَتْ تَّقْرِضُهُمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِيْ فَجْوَةٍ مِّنْهُ ۭ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۭ مَنْ يَّهْدِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ وَلِيًّا مُّرْشِدًا ﴿١٧﴾ وَتَحْسَبُهُمْ اَيْقَاظًا وَّهُمْ رُقُوْدٌ ڰ وَّنُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِيْنِ وَذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ ڰ وَكَلْبُهُمْ بَاسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيْدِ ۭ لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَّلَمُلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ رُعْبًا ﴿١٨﴾

And you see the sun, when it rises, it turns away from their Cave towards the right; and when it sets, it by-passes them towards the left - and they are in the hollow thereof. That is one of the signs of Allah. Whomsoever Allah guides is the one who gets the right path and whomsoever He lets go astray, you will find for him no one to help, no one to lead. [17] **And you think they are awake while they are asleep. And We turn them on their sides, right and left. And their dog has its forelegs stretched out to the doorstep. If you had a look at them, you would have fled away from them and would have been filled with awe of them.** [18]

Commentary

In these verses, Allah Ta'ālā has told us about three states of the Peo-

ple of Kahf. All three are indeed unique and it was the *karāmah*, a matter of wonder, that manifested itself in an extraordinary way around these people devoted to Allah (a thing of wonder that manifests itself at the hands of a prophet of Allah is called a *mu'jizah* or miracle, while if it appears at the hand of some other pious persons, it is called 'Karāmah').

First of all, to be overtaken by continuous sleep for a long time and to stay alive in that state without eating and drinking is by itself a matter of wonder, and certainly contra-habitual and extraordinary. Its details will appear in the verses that follow. Given here is one state of their long sleep, that is, Allah Ta'ālā had arranged for their protection in the Cave in a way that the Sun would pass by them morning and evening but would not shine over their bodies inside the Cave. The advantages of the sunshine passing by them were things like the stabilization of the traces of life, moderation and balancing of the effects of wind, chill and heat etc. And then, the Sun not hitting their bodies directly may have also been a factor in keeping their bodies and dress protected.

This arrangement of keeping them shielded from direct sunlight could also be conceived if the cave lies situated in a particular structural position and the opening of its entrance happens to face south or north in a way that sunlight does not get in there naturally. Ibn Qutaibah went to the trouble of making elaborate mathematical calculations to determine the peculiar location of this Cave precisely in terms of latitude and longitude. (Maẓharī) Contrary to this was the approach of al-Zajjaj who said that the staying of sunshine away from them was not because of any inherent situation or formation of the Cave, instead, it was an extraordinary phenomenon manifested as a *karāmah*. It seems when it was said: ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ (That is one of the signs of Allah) at the end of the verse, it was obviously there to prove that this arrangement of protection from the Sun was not the outcome of any particular formation or location of the Cave. Instead, it was a sign of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā. (Qurṭubī)

To put it candidly, Allah Ta'ālā had it all arranged for them that sunlight will not reach their bodies. It may have been caused through its particular formation or location, or through the barrier of a cloud or something similar when the Sun would start shining, or the very rays of the Sun would be moved away from them in an extraordinary manner.

All these probabilities exist within the verse. There is no need to insist upon fixing any of these as the absolute reality.

The People of Kahf during their long sleep were in a state that an onlooker would have taken them to be awake

The second state of the People of Kahf pointed out is that there were no signs of sleep on their bodies in spite of having been put to sleep for such a long period of time. In fact, they were in a condition that anyone who looked at them would think that they were awake. Generally, commentators say that their eyes were open. The body is relaxed in sleep but this relaxation was not there. The change in the momentum of breathing that comes upon the sleeping was also not there. It is obvious that this state too was nothing short of being extraordinary, a kind of Thaumaturgy (*karāmah*), in which the apparent consideration of wisdom was their protection lest someone taking them to be asleep attacks them, or steals things with them. Then, the changing of sides to the right and the left could also give an onlooker the realization of their being awake. And then, there was a particular benefit as well in changing sides - in that the dust they were sleeping on does not eat into an unchanged side.

The dog of the People of Kahf

At this point, we have a question on our hands. It appears in an authentic Ḥadīth that angels do not enter a house that has a dog or picture. Then, there is a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. There, it has been reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever keeps a dog, except the one used for hunting or guarding livestock, has two *qīrāts* deducted every day from his reward (*qīrāt* or *karat* is the name of a small weight)." And in the report narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ, there is the exception of a third kind of dog, that is, a dog kept to guard land produce.

Based on these Ḥadīth reports, one can ask as to why did these worthy men of Allah take a dog with them? One answer to this could be that the prohibition of keeping a dog is an injunction of the Sharī'ah brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and it is possible that it may not be so prohibited in the Sharī'ah (law) brought by Sayyidnā 'Īsā Masīḥ ﷺ. Then, it is reasonably imaginable that these people who had property and livestock may have kept a dog for their protection from intruders and since the faithfulness of a dog is well known, the dog followed them

when they went out from the city.

Good Company is a Blessing - Even for a dog!

Ibn 'Aṭiyyah says that his father told him that he heard a sermon of Abū al-Faḍl Jawharī in the Hijrah year 469 at the Great Mosque of Egypt. Speaking on the Mimbar, he was telling everyone, 'whoever loves good people, he too gets a share from their goodness. See when the dog of the Aṣḥāb al-Kahf loved them and followed them closely as if appended with them, Allah Ta'ālā mentioned it in the Qur'ān'.

Al-Qurṭubī mentions this report of Ibn 'Aṭiyyah in his Tafsīr. In his comments, he says when a dog can reach this station by being in the company of the righteous and the saintly, imagine how high the station of true believers and pure monotheists who love righteous men of Allah would be. In fact, there is comfort and good news in this event for Muslims who are weak in deeds but do love the Holy Prophet ﷺ fully and duly.

It has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī that Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه said, "One day, I and the Holy Prophet ﷺ were coming out of the Masjid. We met a person at the door. He asked, "Yā Rasūlallah, when will the Qiyāmah come?" He said, "What preparations have you already made for Qiyāmah? (In view of which you want it to come soon)." Hearing this, the man was somewhat ashamed and corrected himself by saying, "I have not collected a lot of prayers, fasts and charities for Qiyāmah, but I love Allah and His Messenger." He said, "If so, [on the day of Qiyāmah] you shall be with those whom you love." Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه says, "when we heard this bliss of a sentence from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, we were so happy that we had never been that happy since we embraced Islam." After that, Sayyidnā Anas said, "[*al-ḥamdulillāh*] I love Allah, His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم, Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضى الله عنهما, therefore, I look forward to being with them." (Qurṭubī)

Allah Ta'ālā had invested the People of Kahf with such awe as would make an onlooker run in terror

The address in verse 18: لَوِاطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (If you had a look at them) is apparently to people at large. Therefore, it does not necessarily follow from it that the Holy Prophet ﷺ too could be filled up with awe generated by the state of the People of Kahf in their Cave. So, the address here is to

common people. They are being told that, were they to cast a look at them in that state, they would have fled away from them in terror and the resulting awe of them would have gripped them all over.

What was the basis of this awe and what were the reasons for it? This is something in which debate is useless - therefore, the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth have not explained it. The truth of the matter is that Allah Taʻālā, in His wisdom, had created such conditions for their protection that the Sun stays away from their bodies, and the onlooker takes them to be awake and is filled with awe of them and is consequently unable to see them fully. It is possible to have these conditions prevail by way of particular physical causes as well as by way of an extraordinary input or as the working of wonder (*karāmah*). Now, when the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth have not determined any particular reason for it, debating it with hollow conjectures is futile. Preferring this approach, Tafsīr Maẓharī cites Ibn Abī Shaibah, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim in support. They have reported an event relating to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ who says: 'we waged a Jihād against Byzantine forces in the company of Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah ﷺ which is known as the battle of al-Maḍīq (المضيق). On this trip, we passed through the site of the Cave of the People of Kahf. The Qur'ān mentions it. Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah wanted to go into the Cave and see the bodies of the People of Kahf. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās said, 'let us not do so because Allah Taʻālā has already prohibited someone better than you from seeing them, that is, the Rasūl of Allah.' Then, he recited this very verse: لَوِاطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (If you had a look at them, you would have fled from them and would have been filled with awe of them - 18). [This tells us that, in the sight of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the address in لَوِاطَّلَعْتَ (If you had a look) was to the Holy Prophet] But, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah did not accept his opinion [perhaps, because he may have taken the address as being to common people and not to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Or, it may be that the Qur'ān has portrayed the condition of the time when the People of Kahf were alive and asleep. Now a long time had passed since they died. It was not likely that they would still have the same atmosphere of awe around them]. However, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, with his position unchanged, sent a few men to find out the facts. But, when they stepped into the Cave, Allah Taʻālā sent a hot wind upon them because of which they could not see anything.

(Maẓharī) (This report was also referred earlier under 'The People of Kahf: Place and Period')

Verses 19 - 20

وَكَذٰلِكَ بَعَثْنٰهُمْ لِيَتَسَآءَلُوْا بَيْنَهُمْ ۭ قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ ۭ قَالُوْا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا اَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ ۭ قَالُوْا رَبُّكُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ ۭ فَابْعَثُوْٓا اَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هٰذِهٖٓ اِلَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ اَيُّهَآ اَزْكٰى طَعَامًا فَلْيَاْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِّنْهُ وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ اَحَدًا ﴿۱۹﴾ اِنَّهُمْ اِنْ يَّظْهَرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوْكُمْ اَوْ يُعِيْدُوْكُمْ فِيْ مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَنْ تُفْلِحُوْٓا اِذًا اَبَدًا ﴿۲۰﴾

And similarly We raised them up so that they ask each other. One of them said, "How long did you stay?" They said, "A day, or part of a day." They said, "Your Lord knows best how long you stayed." So, send one of you with this silver (coin) of yours to the city and let him look around which of the eatables are the purest and let him bring you some food therefrom. And he must be polite and must not let anyone know about you. [19] **If they know about you, they will force you to revert to their faith and in that case, you will never find success.** [20]

Commentary

The word: كَذٰلِكَ (*kadhālik*) in the first sentence is for comparison. The purpose at this place is to describe the mutual likeness of two events. One of these is the event of the long sleep of the People of Kahf for an equally long period of time mentioned in the beginning of the story under the verse: فَضَرَبْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰذَانِهِمْ فِى الْكَهْفِ سِنِيْنَ عَدَدًا : "So, We veiled their hearing (putting them to sleep) in the Cave for a number of years - 11." The second event relates to the rising of these people from that long drawn sleep - intact, healthy and fit despite the absence of any energy-giving intake - and becoming wide awake. Both are alike in being signs of the power of Allah Taʿālā. For this reason, when 'raising them up' was mentioned in this verse, the word: كَذٰلِكَ (*kadhālik*: 'And similarly') was used to indicate that the way their sleep was not like the habitual sleep of common people, very similarly, their rising too was distinct from natural habit. Then, as for the next statement after that:

لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا meaning 'so that they ask each other [as to how long the sleep was],' it is not the reason of 'raising them up.' Instead, it is a mention of a usual phenomenon. Therefore, the particle: لام (*lām*) in: لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا (*liyatasa'alū*: so that they ask) has been identified as the *lām* of *'āqibah* (consequence) or *sairūrah* (result) meaning that which naturally follows as a sequel. (Abū Ḥayyān, al-Qurṭubī)

In short, their long sleep was a Divine sign. Similarly, sitting up all awake after hundreds of years - fit and healthy without usual nourishment - was also another perfect Divine sign. And it was also Divinely intended that they too should come to know that they have been sleeping through hundreds of years, therefore, it began with questions asked between each other and ended at the incident mentioned in the next verse: وَكَذٰلِكَ اَعۡثَرۡنَا (And in this way We made them known - 21). It means that the people of the city knew their secret and, despite the difference in determining the period of their stay, everyone believed that they had been sleeping in the Cave for a long period of time.

Given in: قَالَ قَآئِلٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ (One of them said - 19) is the detail of what was said briefly at the beginning of the story (12) - that they differed about the period of their stay in the Cave and that one of them did say the right thing. According to this detail, one person from among the People of the Cave ventured to pose the question as to how long did they sleep. Then, came the response from some that said, 'a day, or part of a day' - because, these people had entered the Cave in the morning and when they woke up, it was evening. Therefore, they thought, that was the day they had entered the Cave and the duration of their sleep was just about a day. But, some from among these very people realized that, perhaps, this was not the day they had entered the Cave. If so, who knows how many days have gone by? Therefore, they decided to let this particular knowledge about the event rest with Allah. By saying: قَالُوا رَبُّكُمۡ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثۡتُمۡ (Your Lord knows best how long you stayed - 19), they dismissed this debate as unnecessary and turned their attention to the need of the hour, that is, to send a man to the city to bring some food from there.

The word: الۡمَدِيۡنَةِ (*al-madīnah*) in the phrase: إِلَى الۡمَدِيۡنَةِ (*ila al-madīnah*: to the city) proves at least this much that there used to be a big city close to the Cave where they had stayed. In his Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān has said that the name of the city at the time the People of Kahf

left was Ifsūs and now, the name was Ṭarsūs. Al-Qurṭubī has said in his Tafsīr that during the time idol-worship and ignorance prevailed in this city, its name was Ifsūs. But, when the believers of that time, that is, the followers of Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام, overtook it, they renamed it as Ṭarsūs.

The word: بِوَرِقِكُمْ (with this silver [coin] of yours - 19) tells us that these good men had also brought some money with them when they came to the Cave. From here we know that the procurement and management of essential expenditures in life is not contrary to the norms of Zuhd (abstention from worldly desires) and Tawakkul (trust in Allah). (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The word: أَزْكَىٰ (*azkā*) in: أَيُّهَآ أَزْكَىٰ طَعَامًا (which are the purest - 19) means what is clean and pure. According to the Tafsīr of Ibn Jubayr, it denotes Ḥalāl food. They were alert to the need for such precaution because at the time they had left the city, people used to slaughter animals in the name of idols and that was what they sold in the market. Therefore, they stressed upon the man going out to bring food only after making sure that it was Ḥalāl.

Ruling

This tells us that eating food in any city, bazaar or hotel, where most of the food available is Ḥarām, is not permissible without prior investigation.

The word: رَجْم (*rajm*) in: أَوْيَرْجُمُوكُمْ means 'they will stone you to death - 19.' It will be recalled that the king had warned them - before they went to the Cave - that they will be killed if they kept adhering to their present faith. This verse tells us that a renegade in their faith used to be punished by being stoned to death in which everyone participated, expressed collective anger and lent a hand in killing him.

Perhaps, the punishment for adultery committed by a married man or woman by stoning to death, as proposed in the Sharī'ah of Islam, may be aimed at exposing the one guilty of this abominable act at the cost of all norms of modesty and propriety. The execution of the culprit was to remain public with everyone joining in so that two things were ensured - let that disgrace be at collective level, and let all Muslims express their wrath practically so that no one dares repeat this act of shame among

them.

The expression: فَابْعَثُوْٓا اَحَدَكُمْ (So, send one of you - 19) tells us that the group in the Cave picked up a man from among them to go to the city and gave him the money to buy food which he would bring back. Al-Qurṭubī finds this significant. He quotes Ibn Khuwaizmandād and describes some rulings deduced from here.

Rulings

1. Partnership in capital is permissible - because, this amount was shared by all.

2. Power of attorney or delegation of management is permissible in capital, that is, one person can, as an authorized agent, disburse from shared capital with the permission of others.

3. If a group of people shares food, it is permissible - though, individual food intake usually differs with one eating less while the other, more.

Verse 21

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَعْثَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّاَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ
فِيْهَا ۚ اِذْ يَتَنَازَعُوْنَ بَيْنَهُمْ اَمْرَهُمْ فَقَالُوا ابْنُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ بُنْيَانًا ۭ رَبُّهُمْ
اَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ ۭ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ غَلَبُوْا عَلٰٓي اَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ مَّسْجِدًا
﴿٢١﴾

And in this way We made them known to the people so that they realize that Allah's promise is true and that there is no doubt about the Hour. When they were disputing among themselves in their matter, they said, "Erect a building over them. Their Lord knows them best." Said those who prevailed in their matter, "We will certainly make a *masjid* (mosque) over them." [21]

Commentary

Described in this verse which opens with the words: وَكَذٰلِكَ اَعْثَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ (And in this way We made them known) is the disclosure of the secret of the People of Kahf before the residents of the city. Along with it given there is a view of His wisdom, and of the belief in the Hereafter and the

Last Day when the dead will rise again, and that they will ultimately believe in it. How this came about has been mentioned briefly in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī as follows:

The secret of the People of Kahf:
How did the people of the city learn about it?

When the People of Kahf went out, the Mushrik king Daqyānūs, the oppressive ruler of that city died. Centuries went by. Then, it was taken over by people who were pure monotheists. Their king was a righteous man (whose name has been given as Baidūsīs in Tafsīr Maẓharī with references to historical narratives). During his time, it so happened that differences became rampant on the issue of the dead rising again on the day of Qiyāmah. One sect rejected the possibility of human bodies rising again after the process of decomposition, disintegration and dispersal as scattered particles all over the world. Baidūsīs, the king of the time, started worrying about ways to dispel these doubts. When nothing worked, he got into ragged clothes, sat down on a heap of ash and prayed to Allah. Lamenting and pleading earnestly, he said, 'O Allah, now it is up to Thee to make things work out in a way that the belief of my people gets corrected and they take to the right path.' On one side was this king engaged in his plaint and prayer while, on the other side, Allah Ta'ālā arranged to have his supplication answered in His own way. The People of Kahf woke up. They sent one of their men (reportedly named Tamlikha) to the city bazaar to buy food. He went to a shop and paid for the food he bought in the form of a silver coin dating back to the time of king Daqyānūs who reigned there three hundred years ago. The shopkeeper was taken aback. Where did this coin come from? What period does it belong to? He was confused. He showed it to other shopkeepers. Everyone said that the man had struck some treasure and was there with a coin from it. This man told them that nothing of that kind had happened to him and the coin was his own.

The shopkeepers detained him and produced him before the king. As said earlier, this king was a righteous man of Allah. It is said that he was aware of the old state treasure house and in its archaeological section he had also seen the tablet inscribed on which there was a list of the names of the People of Kahf along with the description of the incident of their escape. According to some, the cruel king Daqyānūs was the one

who had ordered that such a tablet should be inscribed to declare them as proclaimed offenders, to preserve their names and addresses and to have them arrested on sight. Some other reports say that there were people in the royal court who disapproved of idol-worship by heart and took the People of Kahf as votaries of truth. But, they did not have the courage to declare it openly. What they did was to have this tablet inscribed to be kept as memorabilia. The name of this tablet was Raqīm because of which the People of Kahf were also called the People of Raqīm.

So, this king knew something about this event and at that time he was busy praying to Allah that He would somehow make his people believe that making dead bodies rise again was not beyond His most perfect power.

Therefore, when he inquired into the background of Tamlīkhā, he was convinced that the man was one of the People of Kahf. He said that he used to pray to Allah in the hope that He would somehow make him fortunate enough to meet the people who had run away from Daqyānūs for the sake of their faith. Now that Allah had perhaps heard his prayer, he was grateful. May be there is, in this event, some decisive proof that makes people believe in the rising of the dead. After saying this, he asked this man to take him to the Cave from where he had come.

The king arrived there with a retinue of people from the city. When the Cave came close, Tamlīkhā asked the king to wait there for a while so that he could go in and inform his companions about the situation. He would tell them that the king was there to meet them along with his people and that the king was a believer, a monotheist and so were his people. If he failed to do that, and the king appeared there unannounced, it was likely that they might take him to be their enemy like the previous one. When Tamlīkhā went in the Cave, he related the whole story before his companions. They were pleased. They greeted the king showing due respect for him. Then they returned to their Cave. And as most narratives have it, when Tamlīkhā related the whole story before his companions, they died and could not meet the king. At this stage, Abū Ḥayyān has reported a narrative in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ which says that after the meeting, the People of the Cave took leave of the king and the visiting citizens and went into the Cave. It was at that time that Allah Ta'ālā sent death to them. Allah knows best the reality as it is.

However, the people of the city now had before them a marvel of Divine power manifested so decisively and clearly. They came to believe in the working of that power. They saw living human beings kept alive for three hundred years without food and things essential in life. And then, they also saw them raised intact, healthy and fit after having been kept asleep for such a long time. With all this in view, why should it be at all difficult for that power to make these bodies come alive after having met their death? Through this event, their perception that the resurrection of bodies was a far out proposition stood refuted. They now realized that taking the Power of the master of the universes on the analogy of the power of human beings was an act of ignorance by itself.

A hint was made towards this very aspect in the words: لِيَعْلَمُوٓا أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللّٰهِ حَقٌّ وَّأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَارَيْبَ فِيهَا (so that they realize that Allah's promise is true and that there is no doubt about the Hour). It means, 'Allah raised the People of Kahf after having kept them asleep for a long time so that others realized that His promise to raise the dead on the Last Day of Qiyāmah was true, and that there was no doubt about the coming of the Qiyāmah.'

People differed after the death of Aṣḥāb al-Kahf

As for the holiness of the People of Kahf, everyone agreed about that and thought of making a memorial for them close to the Cave. However, there was a difference of opinion on the nature of the building. Some reports tell us that idol-worshippers, still left in the city, also used to visit the site. They proposed that it should be a public welfare building. But, the king and the official in his government were believers who played a dominant role in public affairs. They proposed that they should make a mosque over there so that it serves as a memorial to them and also becomes the cause of saving people from idol-worship in the future. At this place in the Qur'ān, the reference to this difference of opinion is hemmed in by the sentence: رَبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ (Their Lord knows them best).

Regarding the meaning of this sentence, Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ has mentioned two probabilities. (1) This was said by the same people from the city present there, because when a memorial was proposed after their death, people thought of inscribing a tablet mentioning the names and the details about the people of the Cave for the memory of whom the building was to be dedicated. And so they started talking variously

about the background details concerning the People of Kahf. In the end, when their differences remained unresolved, they said: رَبُّهُمْ اَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ (their Lord knows them best). After saying that, they turned to the main job at hand which was raising a building in their memory. Those who were dominant decided to make a mosque. (2) Then, the probability that this was said by Allah Ta'ālā also exists here as it warns people who indulged in mutual disputations around baseless issues during that time. They are being told here that they do not know the reality and they do not have the sources to arrive at that knowledge. Why, then, would they waste their precious time in futile argumentation? Then, it is also possible that the warning was beamed at Jews and others who used the crutch of this event to indulge in baseless debates during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Pure and High is Allah who knows best.

Ruling

This event tells us that making a *masjid* for Ṣalāh near the graves of men of Allah is no sin. As for the Ḥadīth in which words of curse have appeared against those who make the graves of prophets a *masjid,* it means making the graves as such a place of *sajdah* or prostration - which is, by consensus, *Shirk,* and *Ḥarām.* (Maẓharī)

Verse 22

سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ ثَلٰثَةٌ رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ ۚ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ
رَجْمًا ۢ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ سَبْعَةٌ وَّثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ ۭ قُلْ رَّبِّيْٓ اَعْلَمُ
بِعِدَّتِهِمْ مَّا يَعْلَمُهُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلٌ ۥ فَلَا تُمَارِ فِيْهِمْ اِلَّا مِرَاۗءً ظَاهِرًا ۠ وَّلَا
تَسْتَفْتِ فِيْهِمْ مِّنْهُمْ اَحَدًا ﴿٢٢﴾

Some will say, "Three, the fourth of them being their dog," and some will say, "Five, the sixth of them being their dog, just making conjectures." And others will say, "Seven, the eighth of them is their dog." Say, "My Lord knows best about their number." No one knows them except a few, so do not argue about them except an apparent argumentation. And do not ask anyone of these about them. [22]

Commentary

The verse opens with the word: سَيَقُوْلُوْنَ (*sayaqūlūn*: Some will say).

Who are these people who will say? There are two probabilities therein. (1) They could be the people who had differed among themselves during the time of the People of Kahf about their name and lineage, already mentioned in the previous verse. Out of these very people, some had made the first statement, some others, the second and still others, the third. (Mentioned in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ from al-Māwardī)

(2) The second probability is that the pronoun in *'sayaqūlūn'* could be reverting back to the Christians of Najrān who had argued with the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the number of the People of Kahf. They had three sects among them. One sect was called Malkāniyah. They made the first statement about the number, that is, gave the number as three. The second sect was Ya'qūbiyah. They went by the second statement, that is, they were five. The third sect was Nasṭūriyah. They made the third statement, saying that they were seven. However, some said that this third statement was that of Muslims. What finally happened was that the third statement turned out to be true as it appears from the hint given by the Qur'ān*, and the word of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The use of the conjunction *wāw*:(and) in: وَثَامِنُهُمْ (*wā thāminuhum:* and the eighth of them) is worth noticing here. At this place, three statements have been reported about the number of the People of Kahf - three, five and seven - and after each, their dog has been counted. But, no conjunction *'wāw'* has been introduced in between their number and the count of the dog in the first two statements. The sentence: ثَلٰثَةٌ رَّابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ (Three, the fourth of them being their dog) and the sentence: خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ (Five, the sixth of them being their dog) appear without that conjunction *'wāw.'* But, the arrangement is different in the third statement. Here, the word: سَبْعَةٌ (Seven) is followed by a connective *'wāw'* attached to the text of: وَثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ (and the eighth of them is their dog).

Giving its reason, commentators say that early Arabs used to count up to seven digits, after which the number that followed was counted as separate, similar to its present counterpart, the number 9 where units end and the tens begin. Therefore, while counting from three to seven,

*. The hint is that the former two views about their number have been termed by the Qur'ān as 'conjectures' while the third view has appeared without such a comment. **(Muḥammad Taqi Usmani)**

they would not use the connective '*wāw*.' To give a number after seven, they would state it separately with the help of a connective '*wāw*' - and for this reason, this '*wāw*' (and) was called the '*wāw*' (and) of *'thamān'* (eight). (Mazharī and others)

The names of the People of Kahf

The fact of the matter is that the names of the People of Kahf do not stand proved authentically from any Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth. Names given in exegetical and historical reports differ. The closest out of these is the report given on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ by al-Ṭabarāni in al-Mu'jim al-Ausaṭ with sound chains of narrators. The names given there are:

Muksalmina مُكسَلْمِينَا
Tamlīkhā تَمْلِيْخَا
Martunis مَرْطُونَسْ
Sanunis سنونس
Sarinunis سَارِينونس
Dhu Niwas ذونواس
Ka'astitiunis كَعسططيونس

Basic rule in debatable matters: Avoid long-drawn argumentation

Referring to the animated efforts to determine the number of the People of Kahf, and other matters, the text says: فَلَا تُمَارِ فِيهِمْ إِلَّا مِرَاءً ظَاهِرًا وَلَا تَسْتَفْتِ فِيهِم مِّنْهُمْ أَحَدًا (So do not argue about them except [with] an apparent argumentation. And do not ask anyone of these about them). The rule of conduct, a golden legacy of the Qur'ān, taught in these two sentences to the Holy Prophet ﷺ are, in fact, significant guiding principles for the learned among the Muslim community. The thing to do when difference arises on any issue is to state what is necessary clearly. If people, even after that, elect to pursue a course of unnecessary debate, one should offer cursory comments in the light of the earlier presentation and conclude the debate. Any effort to dig deeper to affirm one's claim or to make the extra effort to refute the assertion of debaters should be avoided - for nothing good would really come out of it. Moreover, any further prolongation of the debate and altercation would result in uncalled for waste of time as well as pose the danger of mutual bickering.

The second line of guidance given in the other sentence is that the optimum information given to him through Divine revelation about the People of Kahf should be taken as perfectly sufficient and satisfactory for all practical purposes. Let him not worry about finding more and asking others. As for asking others, it could have another aspect too. May be, the question asked is to expose their ignorance or to disgrace them. This too would be contrary to the high morals prophets have. Therefore, restraint was placed on asking both kinds of questions, either for additional investigation, or to prove the addressee ignorant and disgrace him.

Verses 23 - 26

وَلَا تَقُوْلَنَّ لِشَایْءٍ اِنِّیْ فَاعِلٌ ذٰلِكَ غَدًا ﴿٢٣﴾ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ز
وَاذْكُرْ رَّبَّكَ اِذَا نَسِيْتَ وَقُلْ عَسٰٓى اَنْ يَّهْدِيَنِ رَبِّيْ لِاَقْرَبَ مِنْ هٰذَا
رَشَدًا ﴿٢٤﴾ وَلَبِثُوْا فِيْ كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلٰثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِيْنَ وَازْدَادُوْا تِسْعًا ﴿٢٥﴾
قُلِ اللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوْا ج لَهٗ غَيْبُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ط اَبْصِرْ بِهٖ
وَاَسْمِعْ ط مَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ مِنْ وَّلِيٍّ ز وَّلَا يُشْرِكُ فِيْ حُكْمِهٖٓ اَحَدًا ﴿٢٦﴾

And never say about anything, "I am going to do this tomorrow," [23] **unless (you say - 'if) Allah wills.' And remember your Lord if you forget, and say, "I hope my Lord will lead me to what is closer, than this, in guidance."** [24]

And they stayed in their Cave for three hundred years and added nine. [25]

Say, "Allah knows best how long they stayed. To Him belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth - how well He sees and how well He hears! They have no supporter other than Him and He lets no one share His authority." [26]

Commentary

The story of Aṣḥāb al-Kahf is due to end on the four verses cited above. In the first two of these, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Ummah has been taught to say 'Insha'Allah Ta'ālā' along with the promise or affirmation of doing something in the future. Because, who knows if one does or

does not live, and even if one does, will one be able to do or not to do that? Therefore, a believer should be confident about it in his or her heart, and confess to it verbally as well that in the event of making a commitment to do something next day, what will be said will be: 'If Allah Ta'ālā wills, I shall do this thing tomorrow.' This is what the saying of Insha'Allah means.

In the third verse (25), a decision has been given on a controversy. This was a debate in which people had held different opinions during the time of the People of Kahf, and equally different were the sayings of the Jews and Christians of the contemporary period about it, that is, the period of time they kept sleeping in the Cave. It was stated in the verse that those were three hundred and nine years. This is, so to say, a clarification of the statement made briefly at the beginning of the story: فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَىٰٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ فِى الْكَهْفِ سِنِيْنَ عَدَدًا (So We veiled their hearing [putting them to sleep] in the Cave for a number of years - 11).

After that, those who still differ with it have been warned once again that they are not the ones who know the reality of things as they are. The One who knows it all is none else but Allah with whom rests the knowledge of all that is unseen in the heavens and the earth. He is All Hearing. He is All Seeing. The time duration of three hundred nine years given by Him should be enough for their satisfaction.

Saying 'Insha'Allah' on doing something in the future

The background of the revelation of the first two verses has been reported in Lubāb from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ in the following manner. When the people of Makkah acting as coached by the Jews, asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the story of Aṣḥāb al-Kahf etc., he promised to answer that next day without having said Insha'Allah. The least shortcoming issuing forth from the close ones brings some or the other notice of caution. Therefore, no revelation came for the next fifteen days. Naturally, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was grieved and the Mushriks of Makkah had their opportunity to laugh and ridicule. After this interval of fifteen days, when the answer to the questions asked was revealed, these two verses were revealed along with it as a measure of guidance. They told him that, should he need to say something about what he was going to do the next day, he should invariably affirm it by saying Insha'Allah, for everything depends on the intention and will of

Allah Ta'ālā. These two verses, it will be noted, have been introduced at the end of the story of the People of Kahf.

Ruling

Firstly, these two verses (23,24) tell us that saying Insha'Allah in the given situation is *mustaḥabb* (recommended). Secondly, they tell us that, should this part of the statement be left unsaid inadvertently, then, one may say it at the time one remembers. This injunction relates to the particular matter for which these verses have been revealed. It means that the purpose is simply to say this word to invoke Divine blessing and to confess to one's servitude and not to make the statement contingent or conditional. Therefore, it does not follow from here that one would do the same in buying and selling transactions and contracts where conditions are imposed and on this rests the contract between parties. Is it possible to impose a condition whenever one remembers later in case one had forgotten to include the condition at the time of signing the original contract? The difference of some jurists exists in this issue details of which appear in books of Fiqh.

As for the period of sleep in the Cave given as three hundred nine years in the third verse (27), this statement concerning the time duration, as evident from the sequential arrangement of the Qur'ān, is but from Allah Ta'ālā. Ibn Kathīr has declared this to be the position of the majority of commentators, earlier and later. Abū Ḥayyān and al-Qurṭubī have also adopted this view. But, they have also reported another saying from Qatādah and others. It holds that this statement of three hundred nine years is also the saying of some of those who had differed and that the saying of Allah was what was said later: اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوْا (Allah knows best how long they stayed - 26). The reason is, had the earlier statement giving the duration as three hundred nine years been the word of Allah, there would have been no occasion for saying: اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثُوْا (Allah knows best how long they stayed) after that. But, the majority of commentators have said that both these sentences are the word of Allah. The first one describes reality as it is. The second one warns those who differ with it. They have been told that once the statement giving the duration has come from Allah, accepting it is mandatory. Since He is the One who really knows, trying to differ with Him on the basis of mere conjectures and opinions is (to make an understatement) unreasonable.

The question that arises here is about the manner in which the Holy Qur'ān has described the duration of stay. First it mentions three hundred years. After that, it has said that added to those three hundred there are nine. The number three hundred nine was not given initially. According to commentators, there is a reason for it. Since the Jews and Christians followed the Solar Calendar, their count remained three hundred years. And since Islam goes by the Lunar Calendar in which three more years are added every hundred years, therefore, three hundred years of Solar Calendar become nine more years in accordance with the Lunar Calendar. It was to tell the difference between the two years that this expressive diction was employed.

Yet another question arises here about the People of Kahf. During their time and then within the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Jews and Christians had their differences about two things - the number of the People of Kahf and the duration of their sleep in the Cave. The Qur'ān does describe both. However, it has done so with a difference. The number was not mentioned explicitly. Rather, only a hint has been given by not refuting the view which was correct. But, the fixed duration was declared in very clear words: وَلَبِثُوا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلٰثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِيْنَ وَازْدَادُوْا تِسْعًا (And they stayed in their Cave for three hundred years and added nine -25). The reason is that this very remarkable diction of the Qur'ān strongly suggests that this debate on the number of the people of Kahf is virtually useless. No worldly or religious issue relates to or depends on it. Yes, this unusual sleep for such a long period of time, being healthy and fit without food and drink and then sitting up in good shape after such a long time is certainly a working model of Resurrection. That there is a Day of Judgement and that there is a Hereafter can be argued on this basis. Therefore, the period of sleep was stated very clearly.

People who deny the extraordinary miracles, or people who are in the habit of explaining them away overawed by the objections of modern day Jewish and Christian orientalists, have not spared even the Qur'ān. For example, in the case of this verse (25), they have tried to use the explanation of Qatādah as a prop to reject the duration of three hundred nine years as the saying of those very people who were differing among themselves. But, they have erred. The statement: سِنِيْنَ عَدَدًا (for a number of years - 11) which appears in an earlier sentence of the Qur'ān cannot be

called the saying of anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā! To prove the miraculous nature of the event even this much is sufficient that someone remains asleep for years and years and then rises and sits up all intact, fit and alive. Allah knows best.

Verses 27 - 31

وَاتْلُ مَآ اُوْحِىَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ ج لَامُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ ج قف وَلَنْ تَجِدَ
مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مُلْتَحَدًا ﴿٢٧﴾ وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ
بِالْغَدٰوةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَهٗ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنٰكَ عَنْهُمْ ج تُرِيْدُ زِيْنَةَ
الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ج وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ اَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهٗ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ
وَكَانَ اَمْرُهٗ فُرُطًا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ قف فَمَنْ شَآءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ
وَّمَنْ شَآءَ فَلْيَكْفُرْ لا اِنَّآ اَعْتَدْنَا لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ نَارًا لا اَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا ط
وَاِنْ يَّسْتَغِيْثُوْا يُغَاثُوْا بِمَآءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِى الْوُجُوْهَ ط بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ ط
وَسَآءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴿٢٩﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ اِنَّا لَا نُضِيْعُ
اَجْرَ مَنْ اَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا ﴿٣٠﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ
تَحْتِهِمُ الْاَنْهٰرُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيْهَا مِنْ اَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَّيَلْبَسُوْنَ ثِيَابًا
خُضْرًا مِّنْ سُنْدُسٍ وَّاِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُّتَّكِـِٔيْنَ فِيْهَا عَلَى الْاَرَآئِكِ ط نِعْمَ
الثَّوَابُ ط وَحَسُنَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴿٣١﴾ ع

And recite what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is no one to change His words and you will never find a refuge beside Him. [27]

And keep yourself content with those who call their Lord morning and evening, seeking His pleasure, and let not your eyes overlook them seeking the splendor of the worldly life. And do not obey the one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, and who has followed his desire and whose behavior has exceeded the limits. [28]

And say, "The truth is from your Lord. Now, whoever so wills may believe and whoever so wills may deny." Surely, We have prepared for the unjust a fire, whose tent envelops them. And if they beg for help, they shall be helped with water like oily dregs scalding the faces. And vile is the drink and evil is the Fire as a resting-place. [29] **As for those who believe and do righteous deeds - of course, We do not waste the reward of those who are good in deeds.** [30] **Those are the ones for whom there are eternal gardens the rivers flowing beneath them. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold, and they will be dressed in green garments made of fine silk and thick silk, reclining therein on couches. Excellent is the reward and beautiful is the Garden as a resting- place.** [31]

Commentary

Da'wah and Tablīgh admit of no discrimination

Some events have been mentioned in the background of the revelation of the verse: وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ (And keep yourself content - 28). It is possible that all of them became the cause of this instruction. Al-Baghawī reports that 'Uyainah ibn Ḥiṣn al-Fazārī, the chief of Makkah paid a visit to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Sitting there with him was Sayyidnā Salman al-Farisi ؓ who was one of the poor Ṣaḥābah. His dress was tattered and his looks, that of a *derwish*. Then, there were some other poor and humble people like him sitting within the gathering. 'Uyainah said, 'these are the people who stop us from coming to you and listening to you. We cannot sit with such broken-down people. You should remove them from your gathering, or you should, at the least, have one separate gathering for us and another, for them.'

Ibn Marduwayh reports on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ that Umaiyyah ibn Khalaf al-jumaḥī advised the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he should not have poor and broken-down Muslims as those close to him. Instead of that, he should prefer to have the chiefs of Makkah and the Quraysh tribe with him. If these people embraced the religion brought by him, it will advance the cause of religion.

Pursuant to events of this nature, came the Divine instruction that firmly stopped him from accepting their advice. Not only that he should not remove them from his company, in fact, the command given reads: وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ (*waṣbir nafsak*: translated as 'and keep yourself content'). If

translated literally, it could mean 'keep yourself tied with them,' not in the sense of not leaving them anytime, but meaning that he should attend to and relate to these very people, seeking their advice in essential matters and working in association with them alone. Why should he do that and what was the wisdom behind it? The words that follow spell the reason out. They call their Lord morning and evening, remembering Him under all conditions. And what they do is exclusively for the good pleasure of Allah. All these conditions around them are conditions that attract the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā. And such are the people to whom comes the help of Allah. So, let them not worry about the loss of worldly support for the final victory shall be theirs.

The reason why he was prevented from accepting the advice of the Quraysh chiefs has been given towards the end of the verse. It was said that their hearts were heedless of the remembrance of Allah, everything they did was subservient to their physical desires and these conditions guaranteed that they would stand alienated far from the mercy and support of Allah Ta'ālā.

At this point, someone may doubt that this advice was reasonably practicable. A separate gathering for them would have not hurt. In fact, it would have made it easier to convey the message of Islam to them and equally easier for them to accept it. But, the creation of such a division would have amounted to seating the rebellious rich on a pedestal of honor, an action that could have broken the hearts of poor Muslims or dampened their courage. Allah Ta'ālā, in His ultimate wisdom, would not put up with anything like this. Instead of that, the ground rule of Da'wah and Tablīgh given by Him was that there should be no discrimination or distinction against or for anyone in it. Allah knows best.

Ornaments for the People of Jannah

It has been mentioned in verse 31: يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا (They will be adorned therein) that men inmates of Jannah will also be adorned with bracelets of gold. The question it may bring up is that wearing ornaments is neither becoming for men, nor can these be called beauty and embellishment in any relative sense. If bracelets were put on them in Jannah, may be they make them look awful.

The answer is that embellishment and beauty are subservient to

practice or custom as recognized in a society. What is considered to be embellishment and beauty in one country or region could more than often be detested in other countries and regions. And this could be the other way round as well. Similarly, something is taken to be an embellishment in a given period of time. Comes another time and it becomes a blemish. When ornaments and silk dresses will come to be established as embellishment and beauty for men of Jannah too, no one is going to feel strange with it there. That which puts restraints on us here is a law of this world which stipulates that it is not permissible for men to wear any ornament of gold, even a ring or chain for watch made of gold. Similarly, silk clothes are not permissible for men. This will not be the law of Jannah. That is a universe of existence separate from this entire universe of our experience. It cannot be imagined on the analogy of anything in and around us on this basis alone.

Verses 32 - 44

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَّثَلًا رَّجُلَيْنِ جَعَلْنَا لِاَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ اَعْنَابٍ
وَّحَفَفْنٰهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ وَّجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زَرْعًا ﴿٣٢﴾ كِلْتَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ اٰتَتْ
اُكُلَهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمْ مِّنْهُ شَيْئًا وَّفَجَّرْنَا خِلٰلَهُمَا نَهَرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَّكَانَ لَهٗ
ثَمَرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهٖ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهٗٓ اَنَا اَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَّاَعَزُّ نَفَرًا ﴿٣٤﴾
وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهٗ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهٖ قَالَ مَآ اَظُنُّ اَنْ تَبِيْدَ هٰذِهٖٓ اَبَدًا ﴿٣٥﴾
وَّمَآ اَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَآئِمَةً وَّلَئِنْ رُّدِدْتُّ اِلٰى رَبِّيْ لَاَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهَا
مُنْقَلَبًا ﴿٣٦﴾ قَالَ لَهٗ صَاحِبُهٗ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهٗٓ اَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِيْ خَلَقَكَ
مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوّٰىكَ رَجُلًا ﴿٣٧﴾ لٰكِنَّا هُوَ اللّٰهُ رَبِّيْ وَلَآ
اُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّيْٓ اَحَدًا ﴿٣٨﴾ وَلَوْلَآ اِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ
لَا قُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ اِنْ تَرَنِ اَنَا اَقَلَّ مِنْكَ مَالًا وَّوَلَدًا ﴿٣٩﴾ فَعَسٰى رَبِّيْٓ اَنْ
يُّؤْتِيَنِ خَيْرًا مِّنْ جَنَّتِكَ وَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهَا حُسْبَانًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فَتُصْبِحَ
صَعِيْدًا زَلَقًا ﴿٤٠﴾ اَوْ يُصْبِحَ مَآؤُهَا غَوْرًا فَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ لَهٗ طَلَبًا ﴿٤١﴾

وَأُحِيطَ بِثَمَرِهِۦ فَأَصْبَحَ يُقَلِّبُ كَفَّيْهِ عَلَىٰ مَآ أَنفَقَ فِيهَا وَهِىَ خَاوِيَةٌ
عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا وَيَقُولُ يَٰلَيْتَنِى لَمْ أُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّىٓ أَحَدًا ﴿٤٢﴾ وَلَمْ تَكُن لَّهُۥ
فِئَةٌ يَنصُرُونَهُۥ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مُنتَصِرًا ﴿٤٣﴾ هُنَالِكَ ٱلْوَلَٰيَةُ لِلَّهِ
ٱلْحَقِّ هُوَ خَيْرٌ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ عُقْبًا ﴿٤٤﴾

And give them an example. There were two men; We gave one of them two gardens of grapes and We surrounded them both with date-palms and placed tillage between them. [32] **Both the gardens brought forth their fruit and suppressed nothing from it and We caused a stream to flow through them.** [33]

And he had wealth. So, he said to his companion while conversing with him, "I am greater than you in wealth and stronger in manpower." [34] **And he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said, "I do not think that this will ever perish** [35] **and I do not think that the Hour is to come. And even if I am sent back to my Lord, I will surely find a better place than this to return to."** [36] **Said his companion as he was conversing with him, "Do you disbelieve in Him who created you from dust, then from a drop, then He fashioned you into a man?** [37] **As for me, I believe the fact that Allah is my Lord and I do not associate anyone with my Lord.** [38] **And why, when you entered your garden, did you not say, '(Everything is) as Allah wills. There is no power except with Allah'? If you see me less than you in wealth and children,** [39] **then, I hope my Lord will give me (what is) better than your garden and send to yours a punishment from the heavens and it becomes a barren land."** [40] **Or, its water becomes deep-sunk so that you will never be able to search it out.** [41] **And its produce was struck by destruction from all sides and he stood wringing his hands (in anguish) over what he had invested therein while it was fallen down on its trellises and he was saying, "I wish I had not ascribed any partner to my Lord!"** [42] **And there were no supporters who could come to his help, other than Allah, nor was he able to help himself.** [43] **Here is that the power of protection rests with Allah - The True One. He is the best in rewarding and best in requiting.** [44]

Commentary

The word: ثَمَرٌ (*thamar*) in: وَّكَانَ لَهٗ ثَمَرٌ (And he had wealth - 34) means the fruit of trees as well as wealth, in an absolute sense. At this place, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, Mujāhid and Qatādah have taken it in the later sense (Ibn Kathīr) According to the Lexicon, al-Qāmūs, this word is used to denote the fruit of the tree and wealth of all kinds. This tells us that not only did he own gardens and farms, he also had gold, silver and other luxuries. Even his words reported by the Qur'ān: اَنَا اَكْثَرُ مِنْكَ مَالًا (I am greater than you in wealth -34) also express the same sense. (Ibn Kathīr)

About the statement: مَاشَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَاقُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ : "[Everything is] as Allah wills. There is no power except with Allah," it has been reported in Shu'ab al-'Īmān on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "whoever sees something, likes it - and says *'masha'Al-lahu la quwwata illa bil-lah'* - nothing will harm it (that is, what he likes will stay protected).' And it appears in other reports, 'whoever recites this *kalimah* when he likes something he sees, it will stay protected against the evil eye.'

The gist of the arguments of these two persons, as explained by Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavi in Khulāṣa-e-Tafsīr

These verses have described the event of two persons one of whom had a lot of wealth and, proud of it, he refused to accept that there is any life after death, and if there is one, he claimed, he will be given more wealth and reward therein. His argument was that if Allah was not pleased with him, he would not have this amount of wealth in this world.

The other person, though less than him in wealth, was a true believer. He refuted the argument of the former one by saying that the worldly wealth is not a sign of one's being close to Allah, because the worldly benefits are given by Allah, in one way or the other, even to the disbelievers and sinful persons, rather to the snakes, scorpions and beasts. It is a horrible mistake to presume that they are the signs of one's being approved by Allah. Therefore, neither your wealth is the proof of your behaviour being approved by Allah, nor my lesser wealth is a proof of disapproval by Him. Allah's approval or disapproval depends on one's faith and deeds alone and not on the amount of wealth one has.

The word: حُسْبَانًا (*ḥusbāna*) in verse 40 has been explained by Qatādah as 'punishment' in an absolute sense, by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ as 'fire' and by some as 'stoning.' As for what appears after that in the Qur'ān: أُحِيْطَ بِثَمَرِهٖ (And its produce was struck by destruction from all sides - 42), it obviously means that some major calamity hit his gardens, wealth and things of luxury reducing everything to ruins. The Qur'ān does not mention any particular calamity explicitly. It appears that, some fire came down from the skies and burnt the whole thing - as it appears in the Tafsīr of '*ḥusbān*' by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās who has explained it as 'fire.' And Allah knows best.

Verses 45 - 49

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَّثَلَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَآءٍ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهٖ
نَبَاتُ الْاَرْضِ فَاَصْبَحَ هَشِيْمًا تَذْرُوْهُ الرِّيٰحُ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ
شَيْءٍ مُّقْتَدِرًا ﴿٤٥﴾ اَلْمَالُ وَالْبَنُوْنَ زِيْنَةُ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَالْبٰقِيٰتُ
الصّٰلِحٰتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَّخَيْرٌ اَمَلًا ﴿٤٦﴾ وَيَوْمَ نُسَيِّرُ الْجِبَالَ
وَتَرَى الْاَرْضَ بَارِزَةً ۙ وَّحَشَرْنٰهُمْ فَلَمْ نُغَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ اَحَدًا ﴿٤٧﴾
وَعُرِضُوْا عَلٰى رَبِّكَ صَفًّا ؕ لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوْنَا كَمَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۢ ز
بَلْ زَعَمْتُمْ اَلَّنْ نَّجْعَلَ لَكُمْ مَّوْعِدًا ﴿٤٨﴾ وَوُضِعَ الْكِتٰبُ فَتَرَى
الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ مُشْفِقِيْنَ مِمَّا فِيْهِ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ يٰوَيْلَتَنَا مَالِ هٰذَا الْكِتٰبِ
لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيْرَةً وَّلَا كَبِيْرَةً اِلَّآ اَحْصٰىهَا ۚ وَوَجَدُوْا مَا عَمِلُوْا حَاضِرًا ؕ
وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ اَحَدًا ﴿٤٩﴾

And give them the example of the worldly life; it is like water We sent down from the sky, then mingled with it was the vegetation of the earth, and then it turned into chaff that the winds blow about. And Allah has power over everything. [45] **Wealth and children are the embellishment of the worldly life and the everlasting virtues are better with your Lord in respect of reward and better to hope for.** [46]

And (visualize) the Day We shall make mountains move and you see the earth exposed and We shall gather them together so as not to leave a single one of them. [47] **And they shall be presented lined-up, before your Lord. Lo! You have come to Us just as We had created you at first. Instead, you claimed that We will not have for you an appointed time.** [48] **And placed there would be the book (of record), then you will see the guilty scared of what is therein and saying, "Woe to us! What a book is this! It has missed nothing, minor or major, but has taken into account. And they will find what they did all there. And your Lord will not wrong anyone.** [49]

Commentary

The meaning of 'everlasting virtues' (*'al-bāqyāt al-ṣāliḥāt'*- 34)

The Musnad of Aḥmad, Ibn Ḥibbān and Ḥākim have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Accumulate 'everlasting virtues' as much as you can." It was said, "What are they?" He said, "Saying: سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اللّٰهُ اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ اَللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ اِلاَّ بِاللّٰهِ (Pure is Allah. There is no god but Allah. All praise belongs to Allah. Allah is great and there is no power and no strength except with Allah). Ḥākim has called this Ḥadīth - Ṣaḥīḥ. And al-'Uqaili reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ وَلَآ اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اللّٰهُ وَاللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ (Pure is Allah and all praise belongs to Allah and there is no god but Allah and Allah is great): These are the 'everlasting virtues.'" The same has been reported by al-Ṭabarānī from Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah ﷺ. And the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and Tirmidhī have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I like saying: سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ وَلَآ اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اللّٰهُ وَاللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ (Pure is Allah and all praise belongs to Allah and there is no god but Allah and Allah is great) better than everything under the Sun."

Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ said, "Recite: لَاحَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ اِلاَّ بِاللّٰهِ (*lā haula wa lāquwwata illā bil-lāh*: There is no power and there is no strength except with Allah) a lot, because it removes ninety nine types of ailments out of which anxiety is the least painful."

Thus, according to the Tafsīr of 'everlasting virtues' in this verse by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, 'Ikrimah and Mujāhid, it means the very recitation of these words. And Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, Masrūq and Ibrāhīm said that 'everlasting virtues' denote five daily prayers.

And there is another report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ which says that *'al-baqyāt al-ṣāliḥāt'* or 'everlasting virtues' in this verse means righteous deeds in a general sense. Included therein are the words mentioned above, and the five prayers, and all other righteous deeds as well. This explanation has also been reported from early commentator Qatādah. (Maẓharī)

This also happens to be the drive of the meaning in terms of the words of the Qur'ān for these words literally convey the sense of the righteous deeds that are to keep surviving. And it is obvious that all deeds that qualify as righteous and sincere are abiding and everlasting in the sight of Allah. Ibn Jarīr and al-Qurṭubī have preferred this particular Tafsīr.

Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ said, 'Cultivation is of two kinds. Wealth and children are the cash crops of the mortal world while 'everlasting virtues' are the deferred crops of the Hereafter.' Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, 'Everlasting virtues are one's intention as the acceptance of righteous deeds depends on it.'

'Ubaid ibn 'Umair رضى الله عنه said, 'Everlasting virtues are righteous daughters for they are, for their parents, the greatest treasure-troves of reward from Allah.' This is supported by a narration of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها according to which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "I saw a man from my *ummah* under orders to be taken to Hell. Thereupon, his righteous daughters clung to him and started wailing and crying and plaintively supplicating: O Allah, spare him for he was very kind to us in the mortal world and he worked very hard to raise us in our family. Allah Ta'ālā, in His mercy, forgave him. (Qurṭubī)

Visualize the Day of Resurrection

The address to everyone on that fateful Day of Qiyāmah shall be: لَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا كَمَا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ (Lo! You have come to Us [empty-handed, without any of those things you proudly possessed] just as We had created you at first - 47). Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Tirmidhī report on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once gave a Khuṭbah in which he said, "O people! On the Day of Qiyāmah, you will come walking bare-footed, bare-bodied, before your Lord and the one to be donned

with a dress first shall be Ibrāhīm, peace be on him." Hearing this, Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا asked, *'Yā Rasūlallāh,* is it that all men and women shall be naked, and seeing each other?' He said, "That day, everyone will be gripped by such preoccupation and anxiety that no one will have any occasion to cast a look towards any one - all eyes shall be raised upwards."

According to al-Qurṭubī, the statement appearing in a Ḥadīth that the dead will meet each other in Barzakh dressed in their shrouds is not contradictory of this Ḥadīth, because that is the case of Grave and Barzakh (post-death ~ pre-resurrection state) while the present one concerns the plains of Resurrection. And there are some Ḥadīth reports to the effect that the deceased person will rise on the Day of Resurrection in the dress he or she was buried. Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ said, 'Give good *kafn* (shroud) to the deceased among you because they will rise on the Last Day dressed in these.' Some commentators have interpreted the report as relating to Shahīds (martyrs who are buried in their dress). Then, there are others who have said that it is possible that some people rise dressed on the Day of Resurrection and some others, without it. In this way, both kinds of reports conjoin. (Maẓharī)

Recompense (*al-jazā'*) is the Deed (*al-'amal*) itself

Towards the end of verse 49, it was said: وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا (And they will find what they did all there). Commentators generally explain its sense by saying that they will find the recompense of their deeds present there. My respected teacher, Maulanā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī, used to say that there is no need for this interpretation here. Countless Ḥadīth narratives prove that these very deeds of the mortal world will become the recompense - reward or punishment - of the Hereafter. Their forms will transform there. Righteous deeds will transform into the blessings of Paradise and evil deeds will turn into the Hell-fire, snakes and scorpions.

It appears in Aḥādīth that the wealth of those who do not pay Zakāh will come to them in the grave in the form of a big snake. The thing will bite them saying, أَنَا مَالُكَ (*anā māluk*: I am your wealth). The righteous deed, transformed into an elegant human visitor will come to mollify one's terrible loneliness in the grave. Sacrificial animals will provide the ride over the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ. Sins committed will be placed on top of

everyone's heads as their burdensome wherewithal on the Day of Resurrection.

About devouring what belongs to the orphans by unfair means, it was said in the Qur'ān: اِنَّمَا يَاكُلُوْنَ فِىْ بُطُوْنِهِمْ نَارًا (they only eat fire into their bellies - 4:10). All such Qur'ānic verses and Ḥadīth narratives are generally interpreted as figures of speech. But, in the light of the view given above, none of these need a figure of speech to explain. Everything stays intrinsically real, as is.

The Qur'ān has equated the unlawful consumption of an orphan's property with fire. So, the reality is that it is nothing but fire even at that time. But, in order to experience its effect, the condition is that one must pass away from this mortal world. It is like someone calling a matchbox by the name of fire, which is correct. But, in order that it becomes fire, it remains subject to the condition of friction. Similarly, if someone says that petrol or gas is fire, he would be considered as right - though, it would actually materialize only when the condition of being touched by a tiny flame of fire is fulfilled.

The outcome is that one's deed - whatever good or bad one does in the moral world - will take the form of reward and punishment in the Hereafter. That will be a time when its marks of identification will become different from that of the mortal world and take a form of its own. And Allah alone knows best.

Verses 50 - 59

وَاِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوْا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ كَانَ مِنَ
الْجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّهٖ ؕ اَفَتَتَّخِذُوْنَهٗ وَذُرِّيَّتَهٗٓ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِىْ وَهُمْ
لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ ؕ بِئْسَ لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ بَدَلًا ﴿٥٠﴾ مَآ اَشْهَدْتُّهُمْ خَلْقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ وَلَا خَلْقَ اَنْفُسِهِمْ ص وَمَا كُنْتُ مُتَّخِذَ الْمُضِلِّيْنَ عَضُدًا
﴿٥١﴾ وَيَوْمَ يَقُوْلُ نَادُوْا شُرَكَآءِىَ الَّذِيْنَ زَعَمْتُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ
يَسْتَجِيْبُوْا لَهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَّوْبِقًا ﴿٥٢﴾ وَرَاَ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوْٓا

أَنَّهُم مُّوَاقِعُوهَا وَلَمْ يَجِدُوا عَنْهَا مَصْرِفًا ﴿٥٣﴾ وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَٰذَا
الْقُرْآنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِن كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ۚ وَكَانَ الْإِنسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا ﴿٥٤﴾
وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَن يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَّا أَن
تَأْتِيَهُمْ سُنَّةُ الْأَوَّلِينَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا ﴿٥٥﴾ وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ ۚ وَيُجَادِلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوا بِهِ
الْحَقَّ ۖ وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَمَا أُنذِرُوا هُزُوًا ﴿٥٦﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن ذُكِّرَ
بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا وَنَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاهُ ۚ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ
قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَن يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ۖ وَإِن تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَىٰ
فَلَن يَهْتَدُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا ﴿٥٧﴾ وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ۖ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُم بِمَا
كَسَبُوا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ ۚ بَل لَّهُم مَّوْعِدٌ لَّن يَجِدُوا مِن دُونِهِ
مَوْئِلًا ﴿٥٨﴾ وَتِلْكَ الْقُرَىٰ أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا وَجَعَلْنَا لِمَهْلِكِهِم
مَّوْعِدًا ﴿٥٩﴾

And remember when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Ādam." So, they prostrated themselves, all but Iblīs. He was of the Jinn, so he transgressed from the command of your Lord. Is it then that you will take him and his progeny as friends instead of Me while they are enemy to you? Evil is he as substitute, for wrongdoers. [50]

I did not make them witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor their own creation. And I am not the one to take those who mislead as helpers. [51] **And the Day He will say, "Call My 'partners' whom you took as such." So, they will call them but they will not respond to them and We will put a place of disaster between them.** [52] **And the sinners will see the Fire, so they will know that they are to fall into it and they will find no way to bypass it.** [53]

And indeed We have explained in this Qur'ān every subject in various ways for the people. And man is most quarrelsome of all things. [54]

And nothing has prevented people from believing when guidance came to them, and from seeking forgiveness from their Lord but (their demand) that there should come to them what used to come to the earlier peoples or that the punishment should come to them face to face. [55]

And We do not send the messengers but as bearers of good tidings and warnings, and those who disbelieve raise disputes with the false (arguments) so that they may nullify the truth with it. And they have made My signs and the warnings given to them a mockery. [56]

And who is more unjust than the one who was reminded through the signs of his Lord but he turned away from them and forgot what his own hands sent ahead. And We have put covers on their hearts so that they do not understand it, and deafness in their ears. And should you call them to the right path, even then they will never ever take to guidance. [57]

And your Lord is the Most Forgiving, the Master of Mercy. If He seizes them for what they did, He would cause their punishment to come soon. But, for them, there is an appointed time from which they will never find a refuge. [58]

And these towns We destroyed when they transgressed and We made an appointed time for their destruction. [59]

Commentary

The progeny of Iblīs, and his descendants and followers

The word: ذُرِّيَّتَهُ (*dhurriyyatah*) in verse 50 indicates that Iblīs (Shaiṭān, Satan) has offspring, and a host of descendants and followers. Some commentators have said that 'progeny' at this place means 'accomplices.' That the Shaiṭān has offspring from his loins is not necessary. But, there is a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth which Ḥumaidī has reported in Kitāb al-Jam' bain al-Ṣaḥīḥain on the authority of Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisī ؓ. According to his narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ told him, "do not become like those who are the first to enter the bazaar (shopping centre), or those who are the last to leave it, for the bazaar is a place where the Shaiṭān has his eggs and offspring laid around." This would indicate that the progeny of Shaiṭān spreads out in that manner - through what is laid and hatched by him. After having presented this report, al-Qurṭu-

bī has said that the Shaiṭān has accomplices and armies is something established by conclusive proofs - and as for the Shaiṭān having offspring, a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth has appeared above. Allah knows best.

The statement: وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ اَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا (And man is the most quarrelsome of all things - 54) has been testified through a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā 'Anas ﷺ in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, a man from among the disbelievers will be brought forth. He will be asked, 'what was your response to the messenger We had sent to you?' He will say, 'O my Lord, as for me, I did believe in You and in Your messenger too and that I obeyed him in everything I did.' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'here is your book of deeds before you. All this you say is not there.' This man will say, 'I do not believe in this book of deeds.' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'what about these angels of Ours? They used to watch you. They bear witness against you.' This man will say, 'I do not accept their testimony as well, nor do I know them, nor have I seen them while I was doing what I did.' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'if so, this Preserved Tablet (اللوح المحفوظ) is before you. Written here too is the same thing about you.' He will say, 'my Lord, have You granted me asylum from injustice or have you not?' Allah Ta'ālā will say, 'Of course, you have your refuge against injustice with Us.' So then, he will say, 'O my Lord, how can I accept the verdict of those unseen witnesses I am not familiar with at all? As for me, I can only accept a witness that comes from my own person.' At that time, his mouth will be sealed, and his hands and feet will bear witness against his *kufr* and *shirk*. After that, he will be released and thrown into the Hell. (The subject matter of this narrative has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, also from Sayyidnā Anas ﷺ - al-Qurṭubī)

Verses 60 - 70

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِفَتٰىهُ لَآ اَبْرَحُ حَتّٰٓى اَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ اَوْ اَمْضِيَ
حُقُبًا ﴿٦٠﴾ فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنِهِمَا نَسِيَا حُوْتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيْلَهٗ فِي
الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا ﴿٦١﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِفَتٰىهُ اٰتِنَا غَدَآءَنَا ۡ لَقَدْ لَقِيْنَا مِنْ
سَفَرِنَا هٰذَا نَصَبًا ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ اَرَءَيْتَ اِذْ اَوَيْنَآ اِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَاِنِّيْ نَسِيْتُ

الْحُوْتَ ۚ وَمَآ اَنْسٰنِيْهُ اِلَّا الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ اَذْكُرَهٗ ۚ وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيْلَهٗ فِي
الْبَحْرِ ۖ عَجَبًا ﴿٦٣﴾ قَالَ ذٰلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِ ۖ فَارْتَدَّا عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا
﴿٦٤﴾ فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَآ اٰتَيْنٰهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنٰهُ مِنْ لَّدُنَّا
عِلْمًا ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ لَهٗ مُوْسٰى هَلْ اَتَّبِعُكَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِ مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ
رُشْدًا ﴿٦٦﴾ قَالَ اِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٦٧﴾ وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلٰى
مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهٖ خُبْرًا ﴿٦٨﴾ قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِيْٓ اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ صَابِرًا وَّلَآ
اَعْصِيْ لَكَ اَمْرًا ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالَ فَاِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِيْ فَلَا تَسْـَٔلْنِيْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتّٰى
اُحْدِثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ﴿٧٠﴾

And when Mūsā said to his young man, "I shall not give up until I reach the meeting point of the two seas or else I shall go on for years. [60] **So, when they reached the meeting point of the two seas, they forgot their fish and it made its way into the sea as in a tunnel.** [61] **When they went further, he said to his young man, "Bring us our morning meal; we have, indeed, had much fatigue from this journey of ours."** [62] **He said, "You see, when we stayed at the rock, I forgot the fish. It was none but Satan who made me forget it to tell you about it - and, amazingly, it made its way into the sea."** [63] **He said, "That was what we were looking for." So they returned, retracing their footsteps.** [64] **Then they found one of Our servants whom We blessed with mercy from Us and whom We gave knowledge, a knowledge from Our own.** [65] **Mūsā said to him, "May I follow you on (the undertaking) that you teach me a bit of right knowledge you have been given."** [66] **He said, "You can never afford to keep patient while with me.** [67] **And how would you keep patient over something your comprehension cannot grasp?"** [68] **He (Mūsā) said, "You will find me patient, if Allah wills, and I shall not disobey any order from you."** [69] **He said, "Well, if you follow me, do not ask me about anything unless I, on my own initiative, tell you about it."** [70]

Commentary

In the description of this event referred to in: وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِفَتٰىهُ (And

when Mūsā said to his young man), the opening sentence of verse 60, 'Mūsā' means the famous prophet, Mūsā son of 'Imrān عليه السلام . The attribution of this event to some other Mūsā by Nawf al-Bakālī has been sternly refuted by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ as reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī.

As for the word: فتى (*fatā*), it literally means a young man. When this word is used as attributed to a particular person, it carries the sense of his attendant or servant because it is usually a young and strong man who is taken in for this kind of service in order that he could handle all sorts of jobs. Incidentally, it also happens to be an article of good Islamic etiquette that a servant or attendant should be addressed nicely, either by his name, or an appellation such as 'young man.' The ground rule is that even servants are not to be addressed as servants. At this place, the attribution of '*fatā*' is to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, therefore, it means Sayyidnā Mūsā's attendant in service. It appears in Ḥadīth narratives that the name of this attendant was Yūsha' son of Nūn, son of Ifrā'īm, son of Yūsuf عليه السلام. Some narratives identify him as the maternal nephew of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. But, no categorical decision can be taken in this matter. As for his name being Yūsha' ibn Nūn, that much stands proved on the authority of sound narratives. However, there is no proof for the rest of the antecedents. (Qurṭubī)

The word: مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ (*majma' al-baḥrayn*) literally means every such place where two waters meet - and it is obvious that they are many all around the world. Exactly which place is meant by '*majma' al-baḥrayn*' in this context? Since the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth have not pinpointed it precisely, therefore, sayings of commentators differ in terms of traces and contexts. According to Qatādah, it signifies the meeting point of the seas of Fāris (Persia) and Rūm. Ibn 'Aṭiyyah has identified a place near Azerbaijan. Some point out to the confluence of the Gulf of 'Aqabah in Jordan and the Red Sea (Sharm ash-Shaykh). Some others have said that this place is located in Ṭanjah (Tangiers in North Africa). Sayyidnā 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b ﷺ reports that it is in Africa. Suddiyy gives its location in Armenia. Some give its location at the meeting point of the sea of Andulus (Gibraltar) and the Great Ocean (Atlantic). Allah knows best. However, this much is clear that Allah Ta'ālā had told Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام the fixed geographical location of this place towards which he had

made his journey. (Qurṭubī)

The Story of Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses) and Al-Khaḍir (Elias)

Details of this event appear in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. There, according to a narration of Sayyidnā Ubaiyy ibn Ka'b ﷺ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: "Once when Mūsā عليه السلام rose to address his people, the Banī Isrā'īl, those present there asked him, 'of all human beings, who is the foremost in knowledge?' Since (in the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام there was no one more knowledgeable than himself) therefore, he said, 'I am the foremost in knowledge.' (Allah Ta'ālā has His special ways of grooming prophets close to Him, therefore, this statement was not welcome. The etiquette of the situation demanded that he should have resigned his answer to the ultimate knowledge of Allah and said that 'Allah alone knows as to who is the foremost in knowledge among His entire creation'). So, the answer given by Mūsā عليه السلام brought displeasure from Allah Ta'ālā and to him it was revealed: 'Present on the meeting point of the two seas, there is a servant of Ours. He is more knowledgeable than you.' (When Mūsā عليه السلام came to know this, he submitted before Allah Ta'ālā that it was incumbent on him to travel and learn from the person who is superior to him in knowledge). So, he said: 'O Allah, tell me where to find him.' Allah Ta'ālā said, 'put a fish in your basket and travel in the direction of the meeting point of the two seas. When you reach the place where this fish disappears, that shall be the place where you meet that servant of Ours.' As commanded, Mūsā عليه السلام put a fish in the basket and set out. His attendant, Yūsha' ibn Nūn was also with him. During the course of travel, they reached a rock where they lied down resting their heads against it. All of a sudden, on that spot, the fish moved, left the basket and went into the sea. (With this miracle of the fish coming alive and slipping out into the sea, yet another miracle unfolded when) Allah Ta'ālā stopped the flow of water currents all along the way the fish took into the sea making the place like a tunnel into the sea. (Yūsha' ibn Nūn witnessed this extraordinary event while Mūsā عليه السلام was asleep). When he woke up, Yūsha' ibn Nūn forgot to mention this strange happening before him and resumed their journey onwards from there. They traveled for a whole day and night. When came the morning of the next day, Mūsā عليه السلام asked his companion of the journey, 'bring us our morning meal. We have, indeed, had

much fatigue from this journey of ours.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that (as Divinely arranged) Mūsā عليه السلام felt no fatigue at all before that, so much so that he had over-traversed the spot where he had to reach. It was only when Mūsā عليه السلام asked for his morning meal that Yūsha' ibn Nūn recalled the fate of the fish, tendered his excuse for having forgotten to mention it for the Satan had made him forget about the need to report this matter to him earlier. After that, he disclosed that the dead fish had come alive and gone into the sea in an amazing manner. Thereupon, Mūsā عليه السلام said: 'that was what we were looking for.' (That is, the place where the fish comes alive and disappears was the desired destination).

So they turned back that very instant and took the same route they had taken earlier in order to find the spot they were looking for. Now, when they reached the familiar rock, they saw that someone was lying there covered with a sheet from the head down to the feet. Mūsā عليه السلام (taking things as they were) offered the greeting of *salām*. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام asked, 'where in the world does this *'salām'* come from in this (uninhabited) wilderness?' Thereupon, Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'I am Mūsā.' Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام asked, 'Mūsā Banī Isrā'īl?' He confirmed, 'Yes, I am Mūsā Banī Isrā'īl. I have come here to ask you to teach me the knowledge Allah has given to you specially.'

Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'you will be unable to remain patient with me. O Mūsā, there is a knowledge Allah has given to me and which you do not have while there is a knowledge which Allah has given to you which I do not have.' Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'if Allah wills, you will find me patient. I shall not disobey you in any of your orders.'

Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'If you are to be with me, do not ask me about anything unless I tell you about it first.'

After having said this, they started walking by the shore. Then came a boat. A ride was negotiated. The boat people recognized al-Khaḍir عليه السلام and let them come on board free of any charges. No sooner did he step into the boat, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام forced out a panel of the boat with the help of an axe. Mūsā عليه السلام could not restrain himself. He said, 'These people gave us a free ride on the boat. This is what you did to them in return. You tore their boat apart so that they would drown. You have really done something very bad.' Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, 'Did I not tell you before

that you will be unable to remain patient with me?' Thereupon, Mūsā ﷺ offered his excuse that he had forgotten his promise and requested him not to take him to task on his act of inadvertent omission.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ, after relating this event, said, "The first objection raised by Mūsā عليه السلام against al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was activated by forgetfulness, the second as a condition and the third by intention. (Meanwhile) a bird came, sat down on the side of the boat and took out a beak-full of water from the sea. Thereupon, addressing Mūsā عليه السلام, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, "even the combined knowledge of the two of us, yours and mine, cannot claim a status against Divine knowledge that could be compared even with the water in the beak of this bird as related to this sea."

Then, having disembarked from the boat, they started walking on the shore. All of a sudden, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام saw a boy playing with other boys. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام killed the boy with his own hands. The boy died. Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'you took an innocent life unjustly. Indeed, this was a grave sin you committed.' Al-Khaḍir ﷺ said, 'Did I not tell you before that you will be unable to remain patient with me?' Mūsā ﷺ noticed that this matter was far more serious than the first one. Therefore, he said, 'if I question you after this, you will be free to remove me from your company. As far as I am concerned, you have reached the limit of excuses from me.'

After that, they started walking again until they passed by a village. They requested the village people to house them as guests. They refused. In this habitation, they noticed a wall that was about to collapse. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام made it stand straight with his own hands. Surprised, Mūsā عليه السلام said, 'we requested their hospitality. They refused. Now you did such a big job for them. If you wished, you could have charged wages from them to do it.' Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said, ' هٰذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِى وَبَيْنِكَ ' (It means that the condition now stands fulfilled, therefore, time has come for you and me to part company).

Then, after telling Mūsā عليه السلام the reality behind the three events, Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام said: ذٰلِكَ تَاْوِيْلُ مَالَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا which means: 'That was the reality of the events over which you were unable to remain patient.'

Once he had narrated this entire event, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I wish Mūsā عليه السلام could have remained more patient so that we would have come to know more about the two of them."

This lengthy Ḥadīth appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim in a manner that it establishes three things. It clearly mentions the name of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as Mūsā Banī Isrā'īl, the name of his young companion during the travel as Yūsha' ibn Nūn and the name of the 'servant of Allah' to whom Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ was sent towards the meeting point of the two seas as Al-Khaḍir. Now, from this point onwards, we shall take up the verses of the Qur'ān, and explain their sense.

Some rules of the road and a model of high prophetic determination

The first statement made in verse 60: لَآ اَبۡرَحُ حَتّٰۤى اَبۡلُغَ مَجۡمَعَ الۡبَحۡرَيۡنِ اَوۡ اَمۡضِىَ حُقُبًا ("I shall not give up until I reach the meeting point of the two seas or else I shall go on for years") was from Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as addressed to his traveling companion, Yūshā' ibn Nūn. The purpose was to inform him about the direction and destination of the intended journey. This too releases a refinement in manners for he was taking the necessary steps to orient his companion and attendant with the knowledge of things essential for the journey. Proud and arrogant people just do not regard servants and attendants worth addressing, nor would they pass on any information to them about a projected journey.

The word: حُقُبًا (*ḥuqubā*: years) is the plural of: حُقُبَه (*ḥuqbah*). According to lexicographers, *ḥuqbah* is a period of eighty years. Some add more years to this definition. The truth of the matter is that *ḥuqubah* refers to a long period of time. There are no set limits about it. Here, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has told his companion on the trip that he has to reach a particular place at the meeting point of the two seas. There he must reach as commanded by Allah Ta'ālā and that he was determined to continue his journey until he reaches that destination no matter how long the journey takes. When ready to obey the command of their Lord, this is a model of high determination exhibited by prophets.

Precedence of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام over Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, his upbringing and miracles

In the next verse, it was said:

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنِهِمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا

So, when they reached the meeting point of the two seas, they forgot their fish and it made its way into the sea as in a tunnel - 61.

Before we explain the nature of the extraordinary happening there, it is appropriate to first refer to the distinct position bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in the comity of prophets. This has been mentioned explicitly in the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. The special distinction of having conversed with Allah Ta'ālā is his hallmark. With al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, the matter is different. To begin with, the very fact of his being a prophet has been debated. Even if his prophet-hood (*nubuwwah*) is acknowledged, he does not hold the station of a messenger (Rasūl) of Allah. Neither is he credited with a Book, nor does he have a distinct community of followers. Therefore, considering all related aspects, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has marked precedence over al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. But, Allah Ta'ālā has His own wise ways to help those close to Him perform better. He would not let the least want or short coming go uncorrected and not amended. This process of reform at the highest level would even bring serious displeasure from Allah and it is through an equally serious measure that they are made to repair for it. This whole story reflects the same mode of personal training. By saying: انا (*anā*: I), he had said: 'I am the foremost in knowledge.' Allah Ta'ālā did not like it. So, as a measure of warning, he was given the whereabouts of a servant who had a field of knowledge specially given to him by Allah. This Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did not have. Though the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was far higher in rank than that given to him, but the truth of the matter was that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام just did not have it. On the other side, Allah Ta'ālā had blessed Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with an intense desire to seek knowledge. As soon as he smelt the scent of knowledge elsewhere too, knowledge that he did not have, he was all set to go for it traveling like an ardent student and it was Allah Ta'ālā Himself that he turned to for the address of that servant of His (al-Khaḍir عليه السلام). Now, there is something worth pondering at this point. Had it been the will of Allah Ta'ālā that Mūsā عليه السلام should meet al-Khaḍir عليه السلام at that spot, He could have arranged that easily. Or, if Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام himself was Divinely destined to travel, he could have been given a clear address to help him reach it without any botheration. But, what happened here was differ-

ent. The address given to him was far from being precise - 'when you reach the place where the dead fish stirs and disappears, that will be the place you will find Our servant.'

Just about what this Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī proves is that the command to put a fish in their basket came from Allah Taʿālā. Beyond that, it is not known whether the order was to carry a fish for eating or that it was to be carried as separate from what was to be eaten. Both probabilities exist. Therefore, some of the commentators said that this grilled fish was put in to eat and, during the course of the journey, the two travelers kept eating out of it as well. Eaten thus was almost half of it. After that, miraculously enough, this grilled and half-eaten fish came alive and went into the sea.

Ibn 'Aṭiyyah and many others also observed that this fish kept surviving in the world as a matter of miracle and there were those who even saw that it had only one side intact while the other was eaten. Ibn 'Aṭiyyah has also put his personal sighting on record. (Qurṭubī)

And there are other commentators who have said that the command was to put a fish in a basket separate from that for food. The fish was put as commanded. Here too, at least this much is definite that the fish was dead. Its stirring up, becoming alive and going into the sea was nothing but a miracle.

We have said a little earlier that the address of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was left imprecise in a manner that it would not remain easy to pinpoint it. Obviously, this too was nothing but a trial and test for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. As though this was not enough, the scenario of an additional test was activated for them when they had reached the exact spot but forgot the fish. In the verse of the Qur'ān, this act of forgetting has been attributed to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his companion both: نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا (they forgot their fish - 61). But, as regards the story proved from the Ḥadīth of al-Bukhārī, it seems to indicate that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was asleep when came the time for the fish to become alive and go into the sea. This extraordinary event was witnessed by Yūshaʿ ibn Nūn only and he had intended that he would relate it to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as soon as he woke up. But, soon after that happened, Allah Taʿālā cast a state of oblivion on him and he forgot to do that. If so, the attribution of forgetfulness to both of them would be similar to the statement of the Qur'ān: يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا

اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ - 55:22. Here it has been said that pearl and coral are extracted from both sweet and brackish waters - although, these are collected from the later only. But, saying something like this in usage is common. Then it is also possible that since both respected elders had forgotten to take this fish along with them as far as the journey from that point onwards was concerned. Therefore, forgetfulness was attributed to both.

Nevertheless, this was yet another test. After having reached the projected destination, the fish came alive and disappeared into the sea. The reality had unfolded and the place was pinpointed. But, that was not the end. The seeker of truth had to undergo yet another test. Therefore, forgetfulness overtook both of them and it was only after having traveled one day and one night more that they realized hunger and fatigue. This was the third test, because any realization of fatigue and hunger should have naturally come earlier than that. If they had recalled the fish at that earlier time and place, they would have not suffered from such a long additional journey. But, such was the will of Allah Taʻālā that they had to face a little more of hardship. It was only after having gone through the grind of such a long journey that they felt hungry and thirsty and there it was that they remembered the fish and found out that they had come far ahead of their desired destination. Therefore, they returned back on the same footprints they had left earlier.

The first mention of the fish going into the sea was made through the word: سَرَبًا (*sarabā* - 61). Sarab means a tunnel that is dug to open up a passage through the mountains or an underground subway in cities. This tells us that the fish when it went into the sea had a tunnel-like passage forming itself in whatever direction it moved. Water currents did not obstruct its passage at all, rather left it open - as made explicit by the narrative from the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. The second time, when Yūshaʻ ibn Nūn related this event before Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام after their long journey, it was done in the following words: وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا (and, amazingly, it made its way into the sea - 63). There is no contradiction between the two, because the incidence of a tunnel forming itself into the sea was by itself an extraordinarily amazing event.

About al-Khaḍir عليه السلام and the issue of his prophet-hood

Though the name of the person concerned in this event has not been mentioned in the Qur'ān - in fact, he has been called: عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا (a ser-

vant from among Our servants - 65) - but, in the Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, his name has been given as: الخضر (al-Khaḍir). Literally, it means green, verdant. Giving the reason for his name being al-Khaḍir, commentators at large say that grass would grow at the spot where he would sit, no matter what the nature of the land. It would just turn green. The Qur'ān has also not made it clear whether al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was some prophet, or was one of the men of Allah. But, in the sight of the majority of religious scholars, the proof of his being a prophet is embedded within the events mentioned in the Qur'ān. There is a reason for it. Some of the proved events during this journey that issued forth from al-Khaḍir عليه السلام are absolutely counter to the Sharī'ah and there can be no exemption from an injunction of the Sharī'ah except under the authority of a Divine revelation, something restricted to a prophet and messenger of Allah. A *waliyy* (man of Allah) could also come to know something either through Kashf (illumination) or Ilhām (inspiration). But, that is not an authority to prove a rule of Sharī'ah. No injunction of the externally codified Sharī'ah can be changed on that basis. Therefore, it stands established that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was a prophet and messenger of Allah. Given to him were some of those particular injunctions, injunctions that were counter to the codified Sharī'ah. Whatever he did, he did under the authority of this excepted injunction. He himself has attested to that in the sentence of the Qur'ān saying: وما فعلته عن أمري (and I did not do it under my authority - 82) that is, did it under Divine authority.

In short, according to the majority of religious scholars of the Muslim community, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام too is a prophet and messenger. But, it was an imperative of creation that some duties were assigned to him from Allah. The knowledge given to him related to these very duties. Of this Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had no information, therefore, he objected. This subject has been dealt with in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ of Abu Ḥayyān and in most commentaries variously.

It is not lawful for any *waliyy* or man of Allah to contravene the injunction of codified Sharī'ah

Right from here we learn that there is no shortage of ignorant and misguided Ṣufīs who give a bad name to Taṣawwuf. The likes of them would say that Sharī'ah is something else and Ṭarīqah is something else. There are many things taken as *ḥarām* in the Sharī'ah, but they

are permissible in the Ṭarīqah. Therefore, even if you see a *waliyy* (man of Allah) involved in a major sin openly and clearly, you cannot raise an objection against him! This is heresy, flagrant and false. No *waliyy*, no man of Allah anywhere in this world can be taken on the analogy of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, nor can any act contrary to the codified Sharī'ah issuing forth from him be called permissible.

Following the teacher is incumbent on the student

In verse 66: هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِ مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ رُشْدًا , Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, despite being a prophet and messenger of great resolve, has most reverentially requested al-Khaḍir عليه السلام if he could follow him to learn his knowledge from him. This tells us that the etiquette of acquiring knowledge is nothing but that the student should show respect for the teacher and follow him (as an individual who is eager to learn) - even if the student happens to be superior to his teacher. (Qurṭubī, Maẓharī)

It is not permissible for an 'Ālim' of the 'Sharī'ah' to patiently bear what is contrary to the Sharī'ah

By saying: إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ خُبْرًا (You can never be able to keep patient while with me. And how would you keep patient over something your comprehension cannot grasp? - 67, 68), al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was telling Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام about the fact and the reason why he would be unable to keep patient with him. He knew nothing about the reality of the thing. What he meant was that the nature of knowledge given to him was different from the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, therefore, things he did would appear to be objectionable in his sight, until he himself was to apprise him of their reality. Thus, the objections he would raise against such actions would be triggered by the dictates of his mission as a prophet.

Since Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was ordered to go to and learn from al-Khaḍir عليه السلام by none but Allah Ta'ālā, therefore, he was initially at peace with himself hoping that nothing he did would really be counter to the Sharī'ah - though, he may not understand it externally. So, he promised to keep patient. Otherwise, the making of such a promise is not permissible for any 'Ālim of Dīn. But, later on, overtaken by his strong sense of honor relating to the Sharī'ah, he forgot about this promise.

The first event was really not that serious. That the boat people

would suffer from financial loss or the boat may sink remained at the level of an impending danger only - which stood removed later on. But, in the case of the event that took place thereafter, Mūsā عليه السلام did not even make that promise of not objecting. In fact, when he saw the incident of a boy having been killed, he objected vehemently and did not offer any excuse whatsoever for his objection either. He simply said if he came up with an objection next time, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام would have the right of not keeping him in his company. The underlying logic was that no prophet and messenger of Allah can bear by seeing things being done against the norms of the Sharī'ah and yet maintaining a stance of peevish patience. However, this was a unique situation. There were prophets on both sides. Therefore, the reality unfolded. It finally turned out that these fragmentary events were exempted for al-Khaḍir عليه السلام from the purview of the general rules of the Sharī'ah. Whatever he did, he did only in accordance with the dictates of the Divine Waḥy (revelation). (Maẓharī)

Basic difference in the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and al-Khaḍir عليه السلام: Resolution of an apparent dichotomy

Naturally, a question arises here. We see that, according to the explanation of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, the nature of the knowledge given to him was different from that of the knowledge of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Now, when both these two areas of knowledge were given by Allah Ta'ālā alone, why did this contradiction and difference show up in their two respective injunctions? Qāḍī Thanaullāh of Pānīpat has given a research-based answer to this question in his Tafsīr Maẓharī. It is the closest to being right and appealing. Given below is a gist of what I understand from his presentation:

'The blessed souls Allah Ta'ālā honors with His revelation and prophet-hood are generally those who are entrusted with the mission of making people better. Sent to them is a Book and Sharī'ah which offer principles and rules that serve as blueprints of guidance and betterment for the creation of Allah. Blessed prophets and messengers mentioned in the noble Qur'ān as such were all assigned with the mission of Law and Reform. To this related the Revelation they received. But then, there are services essential to the realm of creation (*takwīn*) as well. Generally, appointed to take care of these are the angels of Allah. However, Allah

Ta'ālā has specifically chosen some from among the group of prophets also in order to carry out the services of *takwīn* (whereby the decisions of Allah's will relating to the managment of His creation are enforced). Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام belongs to this very group. These imperatives of *takwīn* relate to minor incidents and events, that a certain person should be saved from getting drowned, or someone should be killed, promoted or demoted or subdued. These matters do not relate to common people at all, nor are they addressed by these imperatives. In such events of minor consequences, one may confront some of those situations where killing a person is against the religious law. But, under the imperative of creation, that particular event has been exempted from the general religious law and the act has been made permissible for the person who has been appointed to carry out this imperative of *takwīn*. Under such conditions, the experts of religious law are not aware of this exempted injunction and are compelled to call it '*ḥarām*' (unlawful) and the person who has been exempted from this law under the imperative of *takwīn* remains in the right in his own place.

In short, wherever such a contradiction is perceived, it is no contradiction in the real sense. It is simply the exemption of some minor events from the general religious law. In al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abu Ḥayyān said:

الجمهور على ان الخضر نبى وكان علمه معرفة بواطن قد اوحيت اليه وعلم موسى الاحكام والفتيا بالظاهر

> The majority holds Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام to be a prophet and his knowledge was the gnosis of (the inner dimensions of the human) self which was revealed to him and the knowledge of Mūsā عليه السلام was of the injunctions and rulings on the apparent. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 147, v. 6)

For the aforesaid reason, it is also necessary that this exemption should take effect through revelation to a prophet. The Kashf (illumination) and Ilhām (inspiration) of some Waliyy (man of Allah) are never sufficient to make such an exemption effective. This is the reason why the act of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام in killing a boy apparently without a just reason was *ḥarām* (unlawful) in the sight of the Sharī'ah which rules on the apparent. But, as for al-Khaḍir عليه السلام, he was appointed to do that while exempted from this law as an imperative of creation (*takwīn*). Taking the Kashf and Ilhām of some non-prophet on the analogy of al-Khaḍir

عليه السلام and thereby taking something *ḥarām* (unlawful) to be *ḥalāl* (lawful) - as popular among some ignorant Sufis - is totally anti-religion and certainly, a rebellion against Islam.

Ibn Abī Shaibah reports an event relating to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه by saying that Najdah Harūrī (a Kharijite) wrote a letter to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and asked as to how did al-Khaḍir عليه السلام kill a minor boy when the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited the killing of minors. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās answered his letter by saying, 'if you were to receive the same knowledge about some minor as was received by Sayyidnā Mūsā's 'man of knowledge' (that is, al-Khaḍir عليه السلام), the killing of a minor would become permissible for you too!' What he meant was that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had received his knowledge about it only through revelation exclusive to a prophet. That nobody can have now because prophet-hood has ended. There is to be no prophet after the Last among Prophets, that is, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ, who could have through revelation knowledge about some particular person to have been exempted under Divine command in the case of such events. (Maẓharī)

From this event too, the real thing becomes clear, that is, no one other than a revelation-receiving prophet has the right to declare anyone as exempted from any Islamic legal injunction.

Verses 71 - 78

فَانْطَلَقَا ٚ حَتّٰىٓ اِذَا رَكِبَا فِى السَّفِيْنَةِ خَرَقَهَا ؕ قَالَ اَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ
اَهْلَهَا ۚ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْـًٔا اِمْرًا ﴿٧١﴾ قَالَ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ اِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيْعَ مَعِىَ
صَبْرًا ﴿٧٢﴾ قَالَ لَا تُؤَاخِذْنِىْ بِمَا نَسِيْتُ وَلَا تُرْهِقْنِىْ مِنْ اَمْرِىْ عُسْرًا
﴿٧٣﴾ فَانْطَلَقَا ٚ حَتّٰىٓ اِذَا لَقِيَا غُلٰمًا فَقَتَلَهٗ ۙ قَالَ اَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةًۢ
بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ ؕ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْـًٔا نُّكْرًا ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالَ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ لَّكَ اِنَّكَ لَنْ
تَسْتَطِيْعَ مَعِىَ صَبْرًا ﴿٧٥﴾ قَالَ اِنْ سَاَلْتُكَ عَنْ شَىْءٍۢ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا
تُصٰحِبْنِىْ ۚ قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِنْ لَّدُنِّىْ عُذْرًا ﴿٧٦﴾ فَانْطَلَقَا ٚ حَتّٰىٓ اِذَآ اَتَيَآ
اَهْلَ قَرْيَةِ ۨاسْتَطْعَمَآ اَهْلَهَا فَاَبَوْا اَنْ يُّضَيِّفُوْهُمَا فَوَجَدَا فِيْهَا جِدَارًا

يُّرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّنْقَضَّ فَاَقَامَهٗ ؕ قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَتَّخَذْتَ عَلَيْهِ اَجْرًا ﴿۷۷﴾ قَالَ
هٰذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِىْ وَبَيْنِكَ ۚ سَاُنَبِّئُكَ بِتَاْوِيْلِ مَالَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا
﴿۷۸﴾

So, they both moved ahead until when they boarded the boat, he broke it. He (Mūsā) said, "Did you break it that you drown its people? You have done something terrible indeed." [71] **He said, "Did I not tell that you can never be able to keep patient while with me?"** [72] **He (Mūsā) said, "Do not hold me accountable for what I forgot. And do not burden me with something difficult in this matter of mine."** [73]

So, they moved ahead until when they met a boy, he killed him (the boy). He (Mūsā) said, "Did you kill an innocent person in retaliation of nobody? You have done something abominable indeed." [74] **He said, "Did I not tell you that you can never be able to keep patient while with me?"** [75] **He (Mūsā) said, "If I ask you about something after this, do not allow me your company. You have now reached a point where you have a valid excuse from my own side (to do so)."** [76]

Then, they moved ahead until they came to the people of a town; they asked its people for food and they refused to host them. Then, they found there a wall tending to fall. So he set it right. He (Mūsā) said, "Had you wished, you could have charged a fee for it." [77] **He said, "Here is the point of parting ways between me and you. I shall now explain to you the reality of things about which you could not remain patient.** [78]

Commentary

It was said in verse 71: اَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرِقَ اَهْلَهَا (Did you break it that you drown its people?). About it, it appears in the Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had dislodged a plank of the boat with an axe because of which there was a danger that water would fill up the boat and it would capsize. Therefore, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had objected to it. But, according to historical reports, water did not fill into this boat. This may have happened either because al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had somehow repaired it himself soon after - as in a report carried by al-Baghawī according to which al-Khaḍir عليه السلام had replaced the plank with

glass. Or, water just did not enter the boat in the manner of a miracle. However, the context of the Qur'ān by itself is telling us that the boat did not capsize - something which supports these reports.

We now move to the sentence: حَتّٰىٓ اِذَا لَقِيَا غُلٰمًا (until when they met a boy -74). The word: غُلٰم (*ghulām*) in the text is used for a minor boy in the Arabic usage. This boy killed by al-Khaḍir ﷺ was a minor - as corroborated by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and most commentators. Further on, when the words: نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً (innocent person) were used for him, that too supports the view that he was a minor. The reason is that زَكِيَّه (*zakiyyah*) means 'free of sin' and it can be either the attribute of a prophet or a minor child who faces no accounting for what is done by him and no sin is written in his Book of Deeds.

The habitation mentioned in: اَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ (the people of a town - 77) which Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ and al-Khaḍir ﷺ passed through and whose inhabitants refused to host them was Anṭākiah, as in the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, and Aikah, as in the report of Ibn Sīrīn. It has also been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that it was some habitation of al-Andulus (Spain) (Maẓharī). Allah knows best.

Verses 79 - 82

اَمَّا السَّفِيْنَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسٰكِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ فِى الْبَحْرِ فَاَرَدْتُّ اَنْ اَعِيْبَهَا
وَكَانَ وَرَآءَهُمْ مَّلِكٌ يَّاْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِيْنَةٍ غَصْبًا ﴿٧٩﴾ وَاَمَّا الْغُلٰمُ فَكَانَ
اَبَوٰهُ مُؤْمِنَيْنِ فَخَشِيْنَآ اَنْ يُّرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَّكُفْرًا ﴿٨٠﴾ فَاَرَدْنَآ اَنْ
يُّبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ زَكٰوةً وَّاَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا ﴿٨١﴾ وَاَمَّا الْجِدَارُ
فَكَانَ لِغُلٰمَيْنِ يَتِيْمَيْنِ فِى الْمَدِيْنَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهٗ كَنْزٌ لَّهُمَا وَكَانَ
اَبُوْهُمَا صَالِحًا ج فَاَرَادَ رَبُّكَ اَنْ يَّبْلُغَآ اَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا
صلے رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ج وَمَا فَعَلْتُهٗ عَنْ اَمْرِىْ ط ذٰلِكَ تَاْوِيْلُ مَالَمْ تَسْطِعْ
عَّلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ﴿٨٢﴾ ع ط

As for the boat, it belonged to some poor people who worked at sea. So I wanted to make it defective as there

was a king across them who used to take every boat by force. [79] **And as for the boy, his parents were believers. We apprehended that he would impose rebellion and infidelity upon them.** [80] **We, therefore, wished that their Lord would replace him with someone better than him in piety and more akin to affection.** [81] **And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city and there was beneath it a treasure for them, and their father was a pious man. So your Lord willed that they reach their maturity and dig out their treasure - a mercy from your Lord. And I did not do it on my own accord. This is the reality of things about which you could not remain patient."** [82]

Commentary

In the first verse, it was said: أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسٰكِيْنَ (As for the boat, it belonged to some poor people - 79). About the poor people to whom this boat belonged, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Ka'b al-Aḥbār رحمه الله that they were ten brothers. Five of them were handicapped while the other five worked hard to eke out a living for all of them by plying a boat against whatever fare they could collect.

The definition of a Miskīn

A *miskīn* has been defined as one who has nothing. But, from this verse, we learn the true definition of a *miskīn*: Anyone who does not have the amount of wealth and property that exceed his need, basic and necessary, to the limit of legal *niṣāb* (threshold of *zakāh*). One who has less than that is also included under the definition of *miskīn*. The reason is that people called '*al-masākīn*' (plural of *miskīn*: poor people) had at least one boat the price of which will not be less than the amount of *niṣāb* (threshold). But, as it was engaged in earning what those people needed, basically and necessarily, they were still called '*masākīn*' (poor people). (Maẓharī)

Regarding the last sentence of verse 79: مَلِكٌ يَّأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا, al-Baghawī has reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that the direction in which this boat was sailing, there was a cruel king who used to take boats ferrying people through by force. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام found it expedient to pull out a plank from the boat so that the cruel king, seeing this damaged boat, would let it go and thus those poor people would remain safe from the likely mishap. Comments sage Rūmī:

گر خضر در بحر کشتی را شکست صد درستی در شکست خضر ہست

Yes, al-Khidr did break the boat while sailing at sea
But, a hundred saving graces in his breaking we see

The opening sentence of verse 80: وَاَمَّا الْغُلَامُ (As for the boy) means the boy who was killed by al-Khaḍir ﷺ. The reality behind it, as stated by him, was that the boy was cut out for infidelity and rebellion against parents. But, his parents were pious people. Al-Khaḍir ﷺ said that they apprehended that, once this boy grew up, he would harass his parents and cause them pain. And when he took to infidelity as a young man, he would not only become a live trial for the parents but would also endanger the very faith of his parents because of their love for him.

In verse 81, it was said: فَاَرَدْنَآ اَنْ يُّبْدِلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُ زَكٰوةً وَّاَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا "We, therefore, wished that their Lord would replace him with someone better than him in piety [having good deeds and morals] and more akin to affection [fulfilling due rights of the parents]."

It will be noticed that the form used in this situation is plural: خَشِيْنَا (we apprehended) and: اَرَدْنَا (we wished). One reason for it could be that al-Khaḍir ﷺ attributed this apprehension and wish to himself and to Allah Ta'ālā both. And it is also possible that he may have attributed it to himself alone - if so, the expression: اَرَدْنَا (we wished) would mean: 'we prayed to Allah' because this matter of replacing a boy with a better one is an act which falls in the exclusive domain of Allah Ta'ālā. Al-Khaḍir ﷺ or some other human being cannot be associated with it.

If, at this point, someone were to say: If it was in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā that this boy will grow into an infidel and mislead his parents as well, then, this event - true to the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā - should have necessarily transpired as it did. Then this doubt would be incorrect for the reason that nothing can come into being contrary to Divine knowledge.

It can be answered by saying that it was there in Divine knowledge with the appendage and condition: If he reached maturity, he will not only become a disbeliever himself but would pose a danger for other Muslims also. Then, as he was killed before reaching the age of maturity, the ensuing event is not contrary to Divine Knowledge. (Maẓharī)

Ibn Abī Shaibah, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Abī Ḥātim have reported from Ibn 'Aṭiyyah that Allah Ta'ālā had blessed the parents of the slain boy with a girl in his place who became the mother of a prophet. And, as in a report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ, she gave birth to two prophets. Some other reports say that through the prophet she gave birth to, Allah Ta'ālā gave guidance to a large community.

About the statement: وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَّهُمَا (and there was beneath it a treasure for them - 82), Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' ﷺ has reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that it was a treasure chest of gold and silver. (Narrated by Tirmidhī and al-Ḥākim, from Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said that it was a tablet of gold inscribed with the following good counsel. This report was also narrated by Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān ﷺ with its chain of narrators ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: (Qurṭubī)

1. بسم الله الرحمٰن الرحيم (*Bismillahir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*: With the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Very Merciful).
2. Amazing is the person who believes in destiny, then how could he despair.
3. Amazing is the person who believes that Allah Ta'ālā is the sponsor of all in their sustenance, still, why would he consume himself in striving for more than he needs and in achieving what is redundant.
4. Amazing is the person who believes in death yet, how could he remain all happy.
5. Amazing is the person who believes in the reckoning of the Hereafter yet, how could he afford to be heedless.
6. Amazing is the person who knows the world and its vicissitudes yet, how could he sit relaxed about it.
7. لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلاَّ اللّٰهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (*lā ilaha illallāh Muḥammad rasūlullāh*: There is no god but Allah Muḥammad is a messenger of Allah).

The benefit of the righteousness of parents reaches children, and their children.

The statement: وَكَانَ اَبُوْهُمَا صَالِحًا (and their father was a pious man - 82)

carries a hint that arrangements were made to have the buried treasure secured for the orphan children through al-Khaḍir عليه السلام for the reason that the father of the orphan children was some pious man dear in the sight of Allah. Therefore, it was to grant his wish and to bring benefit to his children that Allah Ta'ālā made this arrangement. Muḥammad ibn al-Munkadir says: 'It is because of the piety and righteousness of a servant of His that Allah Ta'ālā protects his children, and the children of his children, and his family, even the homes built around his own.' (Maẓharī)

As in al-Qurṭubī, sage Shiblī used to say that he was a guarantee of peace for the city and the area adjoining it. When he died, it was soon after his burial that the disbelievers of Dailam crossed Euphrates and took over Baghdād. At that time, everyone was saying that they were struck by double distress - the death of Shiblī and the sack of Dailam, (Qurṭubī, p. 29, v. 11)

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, this verse also indicates that people too should show consideration and affection for the children of the learned and the pious - unless, of course, they were to succumb to disbelief and sin.

Later, the word: أَشُدّ (*ashudd*) in: أَنْ يَّبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا (that they reach their maturity - 82) is a plural form of: شِدَّة (*shiddah*) meaning maturity, the age when one reaches full maturity and becomes able to decide what is good or bad for him. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, this is the age of twenty-five years. Others put it at forty years because it appears in the Qur'ān: حَتّٰٓى اِذَا بَلَغَ اَشُدَّهٗ وَبَلَغَ اَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً (until when he reaches his maturity and reaches [the age of] forty years - al-Aḥqaf, 46:15)

Prophetic Eloquence and the Nuances of Etiquette: An Example

Before we turn to this example, let us first understand that nothing can happen in this world, good or bad, without the will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. All phenomena of good and evil is as created by Him and is subservient to His intention and will. Things understood or named as evil or bad do deserve to be called as evil or bad in terms of particular individuals and particular circumstances. But, given a total world-view, they all are necessary and nothing but good in terms of being a Divine creation as based on wisdom.

In short, whatever calamity or accident stands activated in this world simply cannot materialize without the will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. In that respect, every good and evil can also be attributed to Allah Ta'ālā. But, the fact is that, given the creation of Allah Ta'ālā, no evil is evil. Therefore, etiquette demands that evil should not be attributed towards Allah Ta'ālā. The words of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام mentioned in the Qur'ān: وَالَّذِىْ هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِىْ وَيَسْقِيْنِ وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِيْنِ (It is He who gives me [things] to eat and drink, [26:79] and when I am sick, it is He who cures me - 26:80) are a good example. They teach us the same etiquette when the provision of food and drink has been attributed to Allah Ta'ālā. Then comes the provision of cure from sickness. This too has been attributed to Him. In between came the mention of sickness. He attributed it to himself in the words: وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِيْنِ (and when I am sick, it is He who cures me) - not in the manner: When He makes me fall sick, He cures me too.

Let us now consider the diction of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. When he formed the intention of breaking the boat - which was obviously a vicious act - he attributed this intention to himself and said: أَرَدْتُ (*ara[d]tu*: I wanted to make it defective - 79). After that, he mentioned the killing of the boy and wished some one would replace him who would be better than him. Here, there was evil in the act of killing while being blessed with better progeny in his place was something good. Therefore, because of this common factor, the form used was that of the first person, plural. It was said: أَرَدْنَا (*aradnā*: we wished - 81) so that whatever obvious evil there lies in it is beamed back to his own self and whatever good lies in it stands attributed to Allah Ta'ālā. As for the third event - setting the wall right to secure the property of the orphans - it was nothing but good. This was attributed entirely to Allah Ta'ālā by saying: فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ (*fa arāda rabbuk*: So your Lord willed - 82).

Is al-Khaḍir عليه السلام alive, or is he dead?

The event related to al-Khaḍir عليه السلام mentioned in the Qur'ān has nothing to do with the question of his life or death after it. Therefore, no clear statement in this regard is present in the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. Some reports suggest his being alive till now while others tell us otherwise. Thus, scholarly opinion has always been at variance in this matter. Those who hold that he is alive argue on the basis of the narrative from

Sayyidnā Anas رضی الله عنه carried by al-Ḥākim in his al-Mustadrak. It says, 'when the Holy Prophet ﷺ left this mortal world, there came a person in black and white beard. Tearing the crowd of people, he reached inside and started weeping. Then, turning to the noble Companions, he said the following words:

إِنَّ فِى اللّٰهِ عَزَآءً مِّنْ كُلِّ مُصِيبَةٍ، وَّعِوَضًا مِّنْ كُلِّ فَآئِتٍ، وَّخَلَفًا مِّنْ كُلِّ هَالِكٍ، فَإِلَى
اللّٰهِ فَانِيبُوا وَإِلَيْهِ فَارْغَبُوا وَنَظَرُهُ، إِلَيْكُمْ فِى الْبَلَاءِ فَانْظُرُوا فَإِنَّمَا الْمُصَابُ مَنْ لَّمْ يُجْبَرْ

Indeed, in Allah there is endurance against all distress, and recompense of everything taken away, and He is the real caretaker for He alone survives after everyone is dead. So, return to Allah, turn to Him passionately and long for Him alone - because, deprived is he who has been deprived of the reward of enduring distress.

After having said these words, when the visitor departed, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی الله عنهما said, 'he was al-Khaḍir علیه السلام.' This narrative has also been reported by Ibn al-Jazrī in his al-Ḥiṣn al-Ḥaṣīn where the compiler is particular about including nothing but what is authentic.

And in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, it appears that Dajjāl (Imposter) will reach a point close to Madinah when a man of Madīnah will come out to confront him. He will be the best of men during that time, or among the better ones. Abū Isḥāq said, 'this person will be al-Khaḍir علیه السلام.' (Qurṭubī)

And Ibn Abī ad-Dunyā has reported in Kitāb al-Hawātif with necessary chains of authority that Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی الله عنه met al-Khaḍir علیه السلام who told him about a Du'ā' which, if recited by anyone after every Ṣalāh, would bring for him great reward, forgiveness and mercy. That prayer is given below:

يَامَنْ لَا يُشْغِلُهُ، سَمْعٌ عَنْ سَمْعٍ، وَّيَا مَنْ لَا تُغْلِطُهُ الْمَسَآئِلُ، وَيَا مَنْ لَا يَبْرَمُ مِنْ اِلْحَاحِ
الْمُلِحِّيْنَ، اَذِقْنِى بَرْدَ عَفْوِكَ وَحَلَاوَةَ مَغْفِرَتِكَ

O He whose hearing of one thing does not hamper His hearing of the other,

And O He who never errs in responding to (millions of) requests simultaneously,

And O He who never becomes weary of the plaints made repeatedly by those who make them in prayers, let me, in Your mer-

cy, have a cool taste of Your forgiveness and sweetness of Your pardon. (Qurṭubī)

Then, within the same book, exactly the same event, the same prayer and the same incidence of meeting with al-Khaḍir عليه السلام has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه as well. (Qurṭubī)

Similar to this, there are countless events relating to al-Khaḍir عليه السلام that have been attributed to the community's men of Allah (*awliyā'*).

As for those who do not accept the likelihood of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام being alive, their major argument comes from the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. He says, 'one night, the Holy Prophet ﷺ led the 'Ishā' prayer for us during the latter days of his blessed life. After having turned for *salām*, he rose and said these words:

أَرَءَ يْتَكُمْ لَيْلَتَكُمْ هٰذِهٖ فَإِنَّ عَلٰى رَأْسِ مِائَةِ سَنَةٍ مِّنْهَا لَا يَبْقٰى مِمَّنْ هُوَ عَلٰى ظَهْرِ الْأَرْضِ أَحَدٌ

Do you see this night of yours? And after a hundred years from this night, not one of those present over the land will be alive!

After having narrated this report, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه said, 'people say different things about it. But, what the Holy Prophet ﷺ meant to say was that this age will be over after hundred years.'

This narrative has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim also from Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh, almost in the same words. But, after having quoted this report, Allāmah al-Qurṭubī said, 'it offers no conclusive argument for those who hold that the notion of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام being alive is false because, in this narrative, the words used for the entire progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام are general with a strong emphasis on the generality. Yet, it contains no decisive authority (*naṣṣ*) to prove that this generality covers the entire progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام necessarily. The reason is that Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام too is among the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام who has not died, nor was he killed. Therefore, as obvious, the letters: الف لام (*alif-lām*) in the words: عَلَى الْأَرْضِ (*'ala al-arḍ*: over the land) is the *alif-lām* of '*ahd*,' (which points out to something familiar to the addressees), and means the land of Arabia. It does not include the whole land mass of the world out of which the Arabs had never heard

even the names of the land of Gog and Magog (Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj), the far East and the Islands of the West.' This was the view of 'Allāmah al-Qurṭubī.

Similarly, some people have taken the issue of the Finality of Prophet-hood as contrary to the notion of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام being alive. The answer to this is also clear. It can be said that the way the 'life' of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام is not contrary to the Finality of Prophet-hood, the 'life' of al-Khaḍir can also be quite similar.

Some people have raised a doubt about the 'life' of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. They say, if he were present during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it would have been mandatory for him to come to him and to serve the cause of Islam under him. Because, it was said in Ḥadīth: لَوْ كَانَ مُوْسٰى حَيًّا لَّمَا وَسِعَهٗ اِلَّا اتِّبَاعِیْ "Had Mūsā been alive [today], he would have had no choice but to follow me [for my coming has resulted in the abrogation of the Faith of Mūsā عليه السلام.]" But, not far out is the possibility that the 'life' and prophet-hood of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام may be different from that of the usual Sharī'ah-bearing prophets. Since he is charged with the duty of carrying out certain affairs of creation (*takwīn*) entrusted with him by Allah Ta'ālā, He takes care of this appointed duty staying aloof from people at large. As for following the Sharī'ah of the Last Prophet, it is not a far out proposition that he may have started acting in accordance with it after the advent of the prophet-hood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. (Allah knows best)

In Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abū Ḥayyān has reported events of several pious elders having met al-Khaḍir عليه السلام but, along with it, he has also said:

وَالْجُمْهُوْرُ عَلٰى اَنَّهٗ مَاتَ

As for the majority of religious scholars, they hold the position that al-Khaḍir عليه السلام has died. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 147, vol.6)

In Tafsīr Maẓharī, Qāḍī Thana'ullāh of Pānīpat has said, 'the resolution of all these difficulties lies in what Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sarhandi, known as the reviver of the second Islamic millennium, said on the basis of his *mukāshafah* (discovery through induced illumination). His words are: 'I personally asked al-Khaḍir عليه السلام about this matter in a state of *kashf*. He said', "I and Ilyās عليه السلام are both not alive. But, Allah Ta'ālā

has granted us the ability to appear in the guise of living men and help people in different ways." (Allah, the Pure, the Exalted, knows best)

Conclusion

I have said earlier that none of our articles of faith or problems of religious practice is connected with the death or life of al-Khaḍir عليه السلام. Therefore, no clarification or explanation was given in the Qur'ān, and Sunnah about it. So, there is just no need to enter into unnecessary discussion or debate in it, nor have we been obligated to believe in any one of the sides of the issue. But, as this problem has found currency on a wider level, details have been provided.

Verses 83 - 88

وَيَسْـَٔلُوْنَكَ عَنْ ذِى الْقَرْنَيْنِ ؕ قُلْ سَاَتْلُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْهُ ذِكْرًا ﴿٨٣﴾ اِنَّا
مَكَّنَّا لَهٗ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٤﴾ فَاَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٥﴾
حَتّٰٓى اِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَغْرُبُ فِىْ عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ وَّ وَجَدَ
عِنْدَهَا قَوْمًا ؕ قُلْنَا يٰذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ اِمَّآ اَنْ تُعَذِّبَ وَاِمَّآ اَنْ تَتَّخِذَ فِيْهِمْ
حُسْنًا ﴿٨٦﴾ قَالَ اَمَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ فَسَوْفَ نُعَذِّبُهٗ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّ اِلٰى رَبِّهٖ فَيُعَذِّبُهٗ
عَذَابًا نُّكْرًا ﴿٨٧﴾ وَاَمَّا مَنْ اٰمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهٗ جَزَآءَ ۨالْحُسْنٰى ۚ
وَسَنَقُوْلُ لَهٗ مِنْ اَمْرِنَا يُسْرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

And they ask you about Dhul-Qarnain. Say, "I shall now recite to you some narration about him." [83]

Surely, We gave him power on Earth and provided for him a way to everything. [84] **So he followed a way,** [85] **until when he reached where the sun sets, he found it setting into a miry spring and found near it a people. We said, "O Dhul-Qarnain, either you punish or take to something good for them."** [86] **He said, "As for the one who transgresses, we shall punish him, thereafter he will be returned to his Lord, and He will punish him - an evil punishment.** [87] **As for the one who believes and acts righteously, he will have the best in reward, and we shall deliver to him of our command that which is easy."** [88]

Commentary

Verse 84 opens with the statement: يَسْأَلُونَكَ (They ask you). Who is asking? Related narratives show that they were the Quraysh of Makkah, those who were coached to ask three questions from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The purpose was to test his prophet-hood and veracity. The questions were about Rūḥ (spirit), Aṣḥāb al-Kahf (People of Kahf) and Dhul-Qarnain. Two of these have already been answered. The story of the People of Kahf has appeared earlier in this Sūrah, 9-26. The question about 'Rūḥ' has appeared towards the later part of the previous Sūrah (Banī Isrā'īl 17:85). Who was Dhul-Qarnain and what happened to him? This is the third question. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

Dhul-Qarnain: His identity, period and country and the reason why he was so named

Why was he named Dhul-Qarnain? (the one having two horns) Regarding its reason, there are numerous sayings, and strong differences. Some said that he had two curly locks of hair, therefore, he was called Dhul-Qarnain. Some others said that he ruled countries of the East and West, therefore, he was named Dhul-Qarnain. There was someone who also said that he had marks on his head that resembled those of horns. It appears in some narratives that he had wound marks on both sides of his head, therefore, he was identified as Dhul-Qarnain. Allah knows best. But, this much already stands determined that the Qur'ān has certainly not given him the name of Dhul-Qarnain. In fact, this name came from the Jews. He may have been known by this name with them. Whatever part of the event of Dhul-Qarnain has been mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān is no more than what is described below:

> "He was a righteous and just king who reached the East and the West and conquered countries in between and ruled there justly. All sorts of means had been provided to him by Allah Ta'ālā in order to help him achieve his objectives. On the route of his conquests, he traveled in three directions: to the far West, to the far East and then to the mountain range in the North. At the last mentioned place, he closed the pass in between two mountains by a wall cast in molten metal which made it possible for the people of the area to stay protected against the pillage of Gog and Magog."

As for the question posed by the Jews to test the veracity and prophet-hood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the answer given had left them satisfied.

They did not ask any more questions, such as: Why was he given the name, Dhul-Qarnain? Which country did he come from? What period of time did he belong to? This tells us that the Jews themselves took such questions to be unnecessary and redundant. And it is obvious that the Qur'ān mentions only that part of history or stories which relates to what is beneficial in the present life or in the life to come, or on which depends the understanding of something necessary. Therefore, neither did the Qur'ān take these things up nor were there any details about it described in any authentic Ḥadīth. And it was for the same reason that the most righteous forbears of Islam, the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'īn also paid no particular attention to it.

Now the thing that remains to be addressed is this matter of historical narratives or that of the present Torah and Injīl. Then it is also evident that perennial interpolations and alterations have not left even the present Torah and Injīl intact as revealed Scriptures. Their status can now be that of history at the most. As for ancient historical narratives, they are overwhelmingly filled with Isrā'īlī tales that come from no authentic source, nor have they been found trustworthy in the sight of the learned of any time. Whatever the commentators have said in this matter is a compendium of these very historical narratives. Therefore, there are countless differences in them. Europeans have given great importance to history in modern times. No doubt, they have carried out painstaking research in this field. Through archaeological excavations and collection of inscriptions and artifacts, they have tried to reach the reality behind past events and in this process, they have come up with achievements not matched in earlier times. But, archaeological finds, inscriptions etc., can certainly help support an event but it is not possible to read a whole event through these. For it, therefore, historical narratives alone have become the basis. As for the validity of old historical narratives in these matters, we have just now learnt that their status is no more than that of a story. In their books, scholars of Tafsīr, classical or modern, have reported these narratives in their historical status only - no Qur'ānic objective depends on the element of their authenticity. Here too, that which is necessary is being written with the same status in view. A comprehensive research relating to this event appears in 'Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān' by Maulānā Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān رحمہ اللہ تعالی. Readers with a taste

for history may see it there.

In some narratives, it appears that there have been four kings who ruled over the whole world - two believers, and two, disbelievers. The believing kings are Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ and Dhul-Qarnain while the disbelieving ones are Nimrod (Namrūd) and Nebuchadnezzar (Bukht Naṣṣar).

About Dhul-Qarnain, it is a strange coincidence that several men have been famous in the world while bearing the same name. And it is equally strange that the title Sikandar (Alexander) is also attached with the Dhul-Qarnain of every period of time.

Approximately three hundred years before Sayyidnā Masīḥ ﷺ, there is a king known as Sikandar (Alexander). He is identified with the appellations of the Greek, the Macedonian, the Roman etc. He was the one who had Aristotle (Arasṭū) as his minister, who fought a war against Dārā (Darius) and who conquered his country after killing him. This was the very last person to have become known in the world by the name Sikandar (Alexander). Stories relating to him are comparatively more famous around the world, so some people have also equated him with the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān. This is totally wrong because this person was a fire-worshipping polytheist. As for the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned by the Qur'ān, he may not be a prophet for 'Ulamā' have differed about his being a prophet. But, everyone unanimously agrees that he was a righteous believer - then, there is the textual authority of the Qur'ān in its own right which bears testimony to it.

Quoting Ibn 'Asākir, Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr has given his complete family tree in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah which ascends to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ﷺ. He has said, 'this is the Sikandar who is recognized as the Greek, the Egyptian and the Macedonian, who founded the city of Iskandariyah (Alexandria) after his name and the Roman calendar dates back to his time. This Sikandar Dhul-Qarnain appeared after a long passage of time from the first one. This time has been identified as being more than two thousand years. He was the one who killed Dārā (Darius), overpowered the Persian monarchy and conquered their country. But, this person was a polytheist. Declaring him to be the one mentioned in the Qur'ān is totally wrong. Ibn Kathīr's own words are being quoted below:

فاما ذوالقرنين الثانى فهوا سكندر بن فيلبس بن مصريح بن برس بن مبطون بن رومى بن نعطى بن يونان بن يافث بن بونه بن شرخون بن رومه بن شرخط بن توفيل بن رومى بن الا صفر بن يقزبن العيص بن اسحٰق بن ابرٰهيم الخليل عليه الصلوٰة والسلام۔ كذا نسبه الحافظ ابن عساكر فى تاريخه المقدونى' اليونانى المصرى بانى الاسكندرية الذى يؤرخ بايامه الروم' وكان متأخرًا عن الاول بدهر طويل' وكان هٰذا قبل المسيح بنحو من ثلثمائة سنة وكان ارسطا طاليس الفيلسوف وزيره وهو الذى قتل دارا و اذل ملوك الفرس واوطأ ارضهم وانما نبهنا عليه' لان كثيرا من الناس يعتقد انهما واحد' وان المذكور فى القران هوالذى كان ارطا طاليس وزيره' فيقع بسبب ذلك خطاء كبير و فساد عريض طويل' فان الاوّل كان عبدًا مؤمنا صالحًا وملكا عادلاً' وكان وزيره الخضر' وقد كان نبيًّا على ماقررناه قبل هٰذا وامّا الثانى فكان مشركا' كان وزيره فيلسوفًا وقد كان بين زمانيهما ازيد من الفى سنة' فاين هذا من هذا؟ لايستويان ولا يشتبهان الاعلى غبى لايعرف حقائق الامور (البداية والنهاية ص ١٠٦/ ج٢)

First of all, this research of Imām ibn Kathīr, the great scholar of Ḥadīth and history, helps remove a misconception. It clarifies that this Iskandar, who lived three hundred years before Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام, who fought Dārā (Darius) and the Persian kings, and who is the founder of Alexandria, is not the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān. This misconception seems to have affected some leading commentators as well. Abū Ḥayyān in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and 'Allāmah 'Ālūsī in Rūḥ al-Ma'ani have said that this very Dhul-Qarnain is the one mentioned in the Qur'ān.

The second point emerges from the sentence of Ibn Kathīr: وَاِنَّهٗ كَانَ نَبِيًّا (he was a prophet). It shows that, in the sight of Ibn Kathīr, the weightier opinion was that he was a prophet. Although, according to the majority of scholars, the weightier opinion is what Ibn Kathīr has himself reported on the authority Abī al-Ṭufayl from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه that he was neither a prophet nor an angel, rather was a righteous believer. Therefore, some 'Ulamā have explained it by saying that the pronoun in: اِنَّهٗ كَانَ (he was) reverts to Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام and not to Dhul-Qarnain - which is closer in sense.

This leaves us with a problem. The Qur'ān mentions Dhul-Qarnain. Who is he? Which period of time did he belong to? Regarding this, sayings of 'Ulamā' differ. According to Ibn Kathīr, his time was the time of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, two thousand years before the time of Alexander, the Greek, the Macedonian. Al-Khaḍir عليه السلام was his minister. Ibn Ka-

thīr has also reported from the early righteous elders in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah that Dhul-Qarnain went for Ḥajj traveling on foot. When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام found out about his arrival, he went out of Makkah to greet him. It is said that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام also prayed for him and passed out some good counsel to him. (Al-Bidāyah, p. 108, v. 3) Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr reports from Adhrāqī that he did *ṭawāf* with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and offered sacrifice.

And Abū al-Raiḥān al-Bairūnī has said in his book al-'Āthār al-Bāqiyah 'an al-Qurūn al-Khāliyah that 'this Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān is Abū Bakr ibn Samma ibn 'Umar ibn Ifrīqīs al-Ḥimyarī, the one who conquered the East and West of the Earth. Tubba' al-Ḥimyarī al-Yamānī has shown pride in his poetry that his grandfather, Dhul-Qarnain, was a believer. He says:

قد كان ذوالقرنين جدى مسلمًا ملكاً علافى الارض غير مبعَّد

بَلَغ الْمَشَارِقَ وَالْمَغَارِبَ يَبْتَغِىْ اَسْبَابَ مُلْكٍ مِّنْ كَرِيْمٍ سَيِّدٍ

Dhul-Qarnain, my grandfather, was a believing Muslim
A king who conquered the non-believing Earth

He reached the Easts and the Wests seeking
Means of power from the noble Master.

Abū Ḥayyān has reported this narrative in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ. Ibn Kathīr has also mentioned it in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah. Ibn Kathīr adds that 'this Dhul-Qarnain is the first Tubba' (the title of the kings of Yaman). He was among the Tababi'ah (plural of Tubba') of Yaman and this is the same person who had ruled in favor of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in the case of Bi'r Sab' (seven wells)' - (al-Bidāyah, p. 105, v. 2). In all these narratives, irrespective of the difference regarding the elements of his identity, his time period has been identified as that of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

As for the detailed discussion relating to Dhul-Qarnain provided by Maulāna Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān in his book, Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān, it can be stated in a nutshell. It can be said that the Dhul-Qarnain mentioned in the Qur'ān is the king of Persia who is called Khorus by the Jews, Cyrus by the Greeks, Gorush by the Persians and Kai-Khusro by the Arabs. His period is said to be the period of Dāniyal (Daniel) from among the prophets of Banī Isrā'īl - much later than the time of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

This brings it closer to the time of Iskandar al-Maqduni (Alexander, the Macedonian), the killer of Dārā (Darius). But, the learned Maulāna - like Ibn Kathīr - has also strongly maintained that Alexander, the Macedonian who had Aristotle as his minister cannot be the Dhul-Qarnain. The former was a fire-worshipping polytheist while the later, a righteous believer.

According to his research about the detailed description of Banī Isrā'īl falling into wrongdoing and rebellion twice, and of the respective punishment given to them twice, as in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (al-'Isra'), the Qur'ān says on the occasion of the first transgression of Banī Isrā'īl: بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَّنَآ أُولِىْ بَأْسٍ شَدِيْدٍ فَجَاسُوْا خِلٰلَ الدِّيَارِ (We sent upon you some of Our servants having strong aggressive power, who combed through the houses - 17:5). Here, the men with 'strong aggressive power' are Nebuchadnezzar and his supporting troops who killed forty thousand - seventy thousand in some narratives - men from the Banī Isrā'īl in Baytul-Maqdis, while taking more than one hundred thousand of them driven like a flock of sheep to his city of Babel. After that, as regards the second statement of the Qur'ān: ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ (Then We gave you your turn to overpower them - 17:6), this event transpired at the hands of the same king, Kai-Khusraw (Khorus or Cyrus). He was a righteous believer. He confronted Nebuchadnezzar, secured the release of Banī Isrā'īl held as captives by him and rehabilitated them back into Palestine. He even went on to resettle and repopulate the city of Baytul-Maqdis that was ransacked earlier to the limit that he managed to have all treasures and major effects of Baytul-Maqdis carried away by Nebuchadnezzar from there returned back into the possession of Banī Isrā'īl. Thus, this person proved to be the savior of Banī Isrā'īl (the Jews).

It is likely that of the questions the Jews of Madīnah had set for the Quraysh of Makkah which they would ask the Holy Prophet ﷺ to test his prophethood, was this question about Dhul-Qarnain and that it had an underlying reason. This question was special since the Jews took him to be their savior and respected him.

In short, Maulanā Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān has collected a sufficiently large number of evidences from the prophesies of the prophets of Banī Isrā'īl with reference to the present Old Testament as well as from historical narratives to present his research on this subject. Anyone who finds it

imperative to proceed towards additional research may consult it. My purpose in reporting all these narratives was simply to bring into focus sayings of leading Muslim scholars, historians and commentators as they relate to the life and time of Dhul-Qarnain. To decide as to whose saying is weightier and worthier out of these is not part of my objective. The reason is that things not claimed by the Qur'ān nor explained by Ḥadīth are things we have not been obligated to fix and clarify on our own for that responsibility does not rest on our shoulders. Thus, whichever saying turns out to be regarded as more weighty, worthy and sound, the aim of the Qur'ān will stand achieved after all. Allah knows best. Let us now proceed to the explanation of the verses.

Let us look at the first verse cited above: قُلْ سَاَتْلُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْهُ ذِكْرًا (I shall now recite to you a narration about him - 83). It prompts us to find out as to why the Holy Qur'ān has elected to bypass the possible shorter expression of 'ذِكْرَهٗ *dhikrahū* (his narrations) at this place and has opted for two words: مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا (*'minhu dhikra'*) (some narration about him)? A little reflection would reveal that these two words have been used as indicators. They tell us that the Qur'ān has not promised to narrate the entire story of Dhul-Qarnain in its historical setting. Instead, it has stated that it will mention it in part. This is evident from the use of the particle: مِنْ (*min*) and the nunnation (*tanwīn*) of *'dhikra'* - a distinct feature of Arabic grammar. As for the historical debate relating to the name, lineage and time period of Dhul-Qarnain reported earlier, the Holy Qur'ān has already said in advance that it has skipped it as something unnecessary.

The word: سَبَب (*sabab*) used in: وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا (and provided for him a way to everything - 84) is employed in the Arabic lexicon to denote everything harnessed to achieve an objective. It includes material instruments and resources as well as knowledge, insight and experience etc. (al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ). As for the expression: مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (to everything), it means all things needed by a ruler to run the state system. The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā had provided for the righteous king Dhul-Qarnain practically everything needed at that time in order that he could maintain his just rule, establish universal peace and extend his area of influence to other countries.

Verse 85: فَاَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا (So he followed a way) means that - though, the material means related to everything, even those that would facilitate his

access to every region of the world - however, the first thing he did was to use his means to travel in the direction of the West.

The statement in verse 86: حَتّٰۤى اِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ (until when he reached where the sun sets) means that he reached the far limit towards the West beyond which there was no populated area.

The word: حَمِئَة (*ḥami'ah*) in the succeeding phrase: فِىْ عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ (into a miry spring) literally means dark marsh or mud carrying the sense of water beneath which there is dark mud and which causes the water itself to appear black. As for the sense of his seeing the Sun setting into such a spring, it means that an onlooker perceived it as setting into the spring because there was no habitation or dry land in sight. This is like being in an open field while the Sun is setting where as far as one can see there appears to be no mountain, tree, or structure, naturally one who looks at the sight would feel that the Sun was sinking into the land mass.

Said in the sentence which follows immediately was: وَوَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا قَوْمًا (and found near it a people), that is, near this dark spring, Dhul-Qarnain found a people. The later part of the verse shows that these people were infidels. Therefore, as said in the next verses, Allah Ta'ālā gave Dhul-Qarnain the choice of punishing them right away for their infidelity. Or, if he so wished, he could choose to deal with them benevolently by first asking them to consider the message of faith and bring them round to embrace it through dissemination of information and good counsel. After that, he could reward those who believe and punish those who do not. In response, Dhul-Qarnain elected to go by the second option. He said that he would try to bring them to the straight path through good counsel and advice. Then, he would punish those who stood by their infidelity and reward those who believed and did what was good.

The statement: قُلْنَا يٰذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ (We said, 'O Dhul-Qarnain...) shows that Allah Ta'ālā has Himself said this addressing Dhul-Qarnain. Now, if Dhul-Qarnain is taken to be a prophet, there is no problem here. It will mean that it was said to him through the medium of revelation. And if, his prophethood is not to be recognized, there is only one way to rationalize the statement: قُلْنَا (*qulnā*: We said) and the address: يٰذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ (*ya*/O Dhul-Qarnain). This way could be to take this address to have been

made to Dhul-Qarnain through the medium of some prophet - as suggested by the reported presence of Al-Khaḍir ﷺ with him. Then, it is also possible that this revelation is just not the kind of *waḥy* that is peculiar to a prophet or messenger of Allah. May be, it is a *waḥy* or revelation in the literal sense like the word: وَاَوْحَيْنَا (*awḥainā*: We revealed or put into the heart) used in the Qur'ān for the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ - though, there is no probability of her being a prophet or messenger of Allah. But, Abū Ḥayyān says in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ that the command given here to Dhul-Qarnain is a command to punish and kill those people. No such command can be given without the authority of a revelation to a prophet. This action cannot be taken on the authority of Kashf (illumination) and Ilhām (inspiration), nor can it be activated through any other source without the authority of *waḥy* (revelation) to a *nabiyy* (prophet). For this reason, no probability other than the one being mentioned here is sound: Either Dhul-Qarnain himself is taken to be a prophet, or that there may be a prophet present during his time and it is through him that Dhul-Qarnain is addressed. And Allah knows best.

Verses 89 - 91

ثُمَّ اَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٨٩﴾ حَتّٰى اِذَا بَلَغَ مَطْلِعَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَطْلُعُ عَلٰى
قَوْمٍ لَّمْ نَجْعَلْ لَّهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهَا سِتْرًا ﴿٩٠﴾ كَذٰلِكَ ۗ وَ قَدْ اَحَطْنَا بِمَا
لَدَيْهِ خُبْرًا ﴿٩١﴾

Thereafter, he followed a way [89] **until he reached where the Sun rises; he found it rising over a people for whom We did not make any cover against it.** [90] **Thus it was. We encompassed in knowledge whatever he had with him.** [91]

Commentary

The Holy Qur'ān does describe this state of the people Dhul-Qarnain found living towards the East meaning thereby that they were not accustomed to the use of ways and means like houses, tents and dresses to seek protection against the Sun. But, it does not mention anything about their faith and deeds, nor does it say what Dhul-Qarnain did to them. However, it is obvious that these people too were infidels and Dhul-Qarnain handled them the way he had handled the people he had found in

the West as mentioned earlier. But, describing it again at this place was not considered necessary since finding it out is also possible on the analogy of the previous event. (As in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ from Ibn 'Aṭiyyah)

Verses 92 - 98

ثُمَّ أَتْبَعَ سَبَبًا ﴿٩٢﴾ حَتّٰىٓ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُوْنِهِمَا قَوْمًا ۙ
لَّا يَكَادُوْنَ يَفْقَهُوْنَ قَوْلًا ﴿٩٣﴾ قَالُوْا يٰذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ إِنَّ يَأْجُوْجَ وَمَأْجُوْجَ
مُفْسِدُوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ لَكَ خَرْجًا عَلٰٓى أَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا
وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا ﴿٩٤﴾ قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّيْ فِيْهِ رَبِّيْ خَيْرٌ فَأَعِيْنُوْنِيْ بِقُوَّةٍ أَجْعَلْ
بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا ﴿٩٥﴾ اٰتُوْنِيْ زُبَرَ الْحَدِيْدِ ۭ حَتّٰىٓ إِذَا سَاوٰى بَيْنَ
الصَّدَفَيْنِ قَالَ انْفُخُوْا ۭ حَتّٰىٓ إِذَا جَعَلَهٗ نَارًا ۙ قَالَ اٰتُوْنِيْٓ أُفْرِغْ عَلَيْهِ
قِطْرًا ﴿٩٦﴾ فَمَا اسْطَاعُوْٓا أَنْ يَّظْهَرُوْهُ وَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوْا لَهٗ نَقْبًا ﴿٩٧﴾
قَالَ هٰذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّيْ ۚ فَإِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ جَعَلَهٗ دَكَّآءَ ۚ وَكَانَ
وَعْدُ رَبِّيْ حَقًّا ﴿٩٨﴾

Thereafter he followed a way [92] **until when he reached between the two mountains, he found on their hither side a people who did not seem to understand anything said.** [93] **They said, "O Dhul-Qarnain, the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj (Gog and Magog) are mischief-makers on the earth. So shall we set for you a revenue, provided that you make a barrier between us and them?"** [94] **He said, "That which my Lord has placed under my control is better, so help me with strength and I shall make a rampart between you and them.** [95] **Bring me ingots of iron." (They proceeded accordingly) until when he leveled up (the gap) between the two mountain-sides, he said, "Blow." (They complied) until when he made it (like) fire, he said, "Bring me molten copper and I will pour it upon this."** [96] **So they (Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj) were not able to climb it, nor were they able to make a hole in it.** [97] **He said, "This is a mercy from my Lord. Then, when the promise of my Lord will come, He will make it leveled to the ground. And the promise of my Lord is always true."** [98]

Explanation of Difficult Words

1. The word السَّدّ used in the expression: بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ denotes what becomes a barrier against something. It may be a wall or mountain and it may be natural or artificial. At this place, the word: السَّدَّيْن (*as-saddain*) means two mountains that stood as a barrier against the intrusion of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. But, they still attacked through the pass in between the two mountains and which was closed by Dhul-Qarnain.

2. The word: زُبَر (*zubar*) in: زُبَرَ الْحَدِيْدِ (*zubar al-ḥadīd* - 96) is the plural of: زبرہ (*zubrah*) which means sheets in the sense of pieces, fragments or ingots of iron which were to be used in the wall designed to block the pass, obviously a stronger device as compared to bricks and rocks.

3. The word: الصَّدَفَيْنِ (*aṣ-ṣadafain* - 96) signifies the two sides of the mountain facing each other.

4. According to most commentators, the last word: قِطْرًا (*qiṭr*) in verse 96 means molten copper. There are some others who have explained '*qiṭr*' as molten iron or pewter. (al-Qurṭubī)

5. The expression: دَكَّاءَ (*dakkaa'a* - 98) used about the wall means what would crumble down to the level of the ground.

Commentary

The Identity of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Location of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain

A lot of absurd and strange things disseminated through Isrā'īlī narratives and historical stories have found currency to the extent that some commentators have also reported them in terms of their historical status, though they themselves do not find them trustworthy. The truth of the matter is that the Qur'ān has mentioned it briefly and the Holy Prophet ﷺ has informed his community also about the details as and where necessary. What has to be believed in as part of one's faith is limited to what has been covered in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth. Beyond that, whatever historical and geographical information has been provided by commentators, Ḥadīth experts and historians could be correct, or might as well prove incorrect. As for the variant sayings of historians from among those mentioned above, they are based on traces, analogies and conjectures. Whether they are true or false, it simply does not affect

what the Qur'ān says.

At this place, I would first quote Aḥādīth which, according to respected Ḥadīth experts, are sound or trustworthy. After that, historical narratives will be taken up to the measure of their need in the present context.

Ḥadīth Reports about Ya'jūj Ma'jūj

At least this much stands doubtlessly proved from the statements of Qur'ān, and Sunnah that Ya'jūj Ma'jūj are national entities from among human beings. They are the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام very much like them because so says the categorical statement (*naṣṣ*) of the Qur'ān: وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُمُ الْبٰقِيْنَ which means that all human beings surviving on the Earth after the Flood during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام shall all be from among his progeny. Historical narratives converge on the fact that they are of the progeny of Yafith son of Nūḥ عليه السلام - which is supported by a weak Ḥadīth as well. Regarding the rest of their antecedents, the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā an-Nawwās ibn Sam'ān رضي الله عنه is most detailed and sound in authority. It has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim and in all books of Aḥādīth recognized for their authenticity. Ḥadīth experts declare it to be sound and authentic. This Ḥadīth carries details concerning the appearance of Dajjāl (anti-Christ), the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and then, the appearance of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. A translation of this entire Ḥadīth is being given below:

Sayyidnā an-Nawwās ibn Sam'ān رضي الله عنه says that one morning the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioned Dajjāl (anti-Christ) and while doing that he said a few things which showed the low and negative aspect of his profile (such as his being one-eyed). Then, he also said a few things about him to the effect that his emergence was a matter of ominous trial (such as Paradise and Hell being with him and other extra-ordinary aspects of his persona). His narration (gripped us with such fear) as if Dajjāl was lurking somewhere (in the nearby) grooves of the date palms.

When we presented ourselves before him in the evening, he read our confused inner condition and asked, 'What is the matter with you?' (What did you conclude from what I had said?). We submitted, 'You talked about Dajjāl in the morning. Of things you said about him some seemed to belittle the matter of his emergence while you also said other

things which seemed to highlight his matter to proportions of a great trial to the extent that we thought he was present close to us in the grooves of the date-palms!' Then he said, 'Not just the Dajjāl, there are other trials I fear may afflict you more (that is, the trial of Dajjāl is not as great as you have taken it to be). If he appears - and I am among you - I shall confront him personally without you. And if he appears - and I am not among you - everyone will try to confront him in terms of his courage. And Allah is, in my absence, the guardian and protector of all Muslims. (You will recognize him as) a young man - hard curly hair, one eye protruding upwards (blind in the other as in other narratives). And if I can liken him (in this ugly profile) with someone, it is 'Abd al-'Uzza ibn Qaṭān (an ugly person from the tribe of Banū Khuzā'ah during the Jāhiliyyah). If a Muslim from among you runs into him, he should recite the initial verses of Sūrah al-Kahf against him (which will keep him protected from Dajjāl). Dajjāl will emerge from the empty space between Syria and 'Iraq creating havoc right and left. O servants of Allah, you then stay firm against him.' We said, 'Yā Rasūlallah, and how long will he tarry on the Earth?' He said, 'Forty days. But, the first day will be equal to one year, and the second day to one month, and the rest of the days equal to the usual.' We said, 'Yā Rasūlallah, so on that day which will be equal to one year, shall we be offering (the five-timed) Ṣalāh for one day only?' He said, 'No. You will, rather, go by estimating time and offering prayers for the whole year.' We said, 'Yā Rasūlallah, how fast will he be moving about the Earth?' He said, 'Fast like the cloud being followed by wind. Then he will pass by a people and ask them to rally round his false beliefs. They will believe in him and respond to his call. Then he will commission the clouds. They will start raining. He will order the Earth. It will turn green and verdant (and herds of cattle will graze therein) and when they return in the evening, their humps shall be much higher than before and their udders shall be full of milk and their waists shall be plumb. Then, Dajjāl will pass by another people and invite them to his disbelief. But, they will turn down his invitation. Losing hope, when he goes away from them, these believers will be stricken with famine and nothing of what once belonged to them will remain in their hands. And when Dajjāl will walk by this wasteland, he will address it, saying: 'Bring your treasures out.' So, its treasures will start following him like the honeybees follow their queen. Then Dajjāl

will call a man whose youth shall be in full bloom, strike him with a sword and cut him into two pieces and the two pieces will be placed as far apart as the distance between an archer and his target. Then he will call him. He will come (alive) to Dajjāl beaming with joy over his feat. In the meantime, Allah Ta'ālā will send down Al-Masīḥ ibn Maryam (Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ). He will alight at the white tower in the eastern part of Dimashq (Damascus) clad in two colored sheets with both hands resting on the wings of angels. When he bows his blessed head, drops of water will drip down from there (as if one has just come out of the shower). And when he raises his head up, from it drop silvery globules like genuine pearls. Any disbeliever who breathes the air from his breath will die that very instant and his breath will reach as far as reaches his glance. Then he will look for him until he will overtake him at the gate of Ludd (still there in Baytul-Maqdis by the same name) and kill him. After that, 'Īsā ibn Maryam will come to people whom Allah protected from Dajjāl. He will then touch their faces (with compassion for them) and give them the good news of having high ranks in Paradise.

While he would still be in the same state, Allah will reveal to 'Īsā: 'Verily, I am going to send forth the kind of men from among servants belonging to Me against whom no two hands will dare fight. So, you assemble and take My servants to the sanctuary of Mount Ṭūr (which Sayyidnā 'Īsā will do) and would send out Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj and they will be seen hurtling down from every side. The first wave of them will pass by Buḥairah Ṭabariyyah. They would drink out everything in it and when others of them will pass by it, (and seeing it dry) they will say: 'Surely, in this, there must have been water earlier in time.'

The prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will take refuge on the Mount Ṭūr. Other believers will find sanctuaries in their own fortified places. Food supplies will be there, but it would run short whereupon the head of a bull will be considered better than a hundred *dīnār*. Then, the prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will turn to Allah (and pray for the removal of their distress which will be answered) and He will send an epidemic (worm in neck) and they will be annihilated en masse to the last person. Then, the prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will come down from the Mount of Ṭūr and see not a hand-span worth of land remaining unfilled with corpses and (because of their de-

composition) the place will be reeking with a strong stench. (Seeing this state of affairs) the prophet of Allah, 'Īsā, and his companions will turn to Allah (praying for the removal of this distress as well which Allah will answer). He will send birds with necks like the neck of a camel. They will haul these corpses and throw them at the place where Allah wills (according to some narratives, they will put them away into the sea).

After that, Allah Ta'ālā will send rains. No clay home in the villages and no Bedouin tent in the desert will remain without it. Lands will be washed clean and left like mirror. Then, Allah Ta'ālā will tell the Earth, 'Grow your fruits and unravel the abundance of your blessings.' (And so it shall be and such shall be the bliss of increase that) one pomegranate will suffice as food for a group of people. And its shell will be used to make canopies for protection against the Sun and milk will be so blessed as to suffice for a large number of people. Milk from one cow will be enough for everyone in a tribe and milk from one goat will be adequate for a whole clan. (After forty years of this period of extra-ordinary abundance, peace and protection, when the time due for Qiyāmah will draw near) Allah Ta'ālā will send a pleasant wind which will cause their armpits to be benumbed and the soul of every believer and every Muslim will be taken away. Left there will be the worst among human beings, the wicked and the disbelieving ones, who will indulge in shame and outrage on the Earth like donkeys. And it is against them that the Hour will stand activated.'

As for the story of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj, the narration of Sayyidnā 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd ﷺ deals with it in greater detail. It says that once they pass by Buḥairah Ṭabariyyah, Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will climb Jabal al-Khamar, a mountain from among the mountains of Baytul-Maqdis, and say, 'We have killed whoever there was on the Earth. Come, let us now kill whoever there is out in the skies." So they will shoot their arrows towards the sky and Allah will make their arrows return back to them smeared with blood (so that those dim-witted people are pleased with the prospect that they have done away with whoever there was in the skies).

About the story of Dajjāl, the narration of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ adds that Dajjāl will stay away from al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah. When it will not be possible for him to reach even the link roads

leading to it, he will come to a saline tract of land close to Madīnah. At that time, a man will come out to confront him and this man will be the best of men at that time (or, among the best of men). Addressing him, he will say, 'I am certain that you are the Dajjāl about whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ had told us.' (Hearing this), Dajjāl will start saying, 'Tell me, O people, if I kill this man, then make him alive, will you still doubt the thing (about my being God)?' They said, 'No.' So he will kill him and then bring him back to life whereupon he will tell Dajjāl, 'By Allah, now I have become more certain that you are the Dajjāl.' Hence, Dajjāl would want to kill him (all over again), but he will remain unable to enforce it. (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, Allah Ta'ālā will ask Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, 'raise the Hell-bound from your progeny.' He will wonder, 'my Lord, who are they?' Then, the Divine command will go forth that nine hundred and ninety nine of every one thousand are Hell-bound with only one bound to go to Paradise. Scared, the noble Ṣaḥābah asked, 'Yā Rasūlallah, 'who from among us shall be the one bound to go to Paradise?' Thereupon, he said, 'do not worry because out of these nine hundred and ninety nine Hell-bound people, there will be only one from among you while, ratio-wise, there will be a thousand from among the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj.' According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه in the Mustadrak of al-Hakim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that Allah Ta'ālā divided all human beings into ten parts. Nine of these belong to Ya'jūj Ma'jūj while the remaining one part covers the human beings of the whole world. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After having quoted these narrations in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah, Ibn Kathīr has written that it tells us that the number of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj is significantly higher than the entire human population.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd with sound chains of authority, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that 'Īsā عليه السلام will live on the Earth for forty years after his descension. As for the narration in Muslim which puts this duration of stay at seven years, it has been rated as less in strength or having some unapparent meaning (*marjūḥ* or *mu'awwal*) by Ḥāfiẓ in

Fatḥ al-Bārī who has declared the very period of forty years as correct. Then there are clarifications in Aḥādīth which report that this whole period will be marked with peace and blessings. Absolutely no malice and hostility will exist among people, none even between any two of them. (Muslim and Aḥmad)

Al-Bukhārī reports from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the Hajj and 'Umrah of Baytullah will continue even after the emergence of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim report from Umm al-Mu'minīn, Sayyidah Zainab bint Jaḥsh that one day the Holy Prophet ﷺ woke up from sleep with his blessed face red while he was saying:

> لا اله اِلاَّ اللّٰه ويل لّلعرب من شرقد اقترب فتح اليوم من ردم يأجوج و مأجوج مثل
> هذه وحلّق تسعين
>
> *'Lā ilāha illallāh.* Alas for Arabia! Evil is drawing near. Today, a part of the Wall of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj has opened up like this' and he made a ring by joining the tips of his thumb and index finger (to indicate the size of the hole in the Wall).

Umm al-Mu'minīn, Sayyidah Zainab رضی اللّٰه عنها says that following his statement, we submitted, 'Yā Rasūlallah, is our destruction possible even when we have righteous people among us?' He said, 'Yes, it is - (particularly) when evil (*khabath*) abounds' (similar reports appear in the two Ṣaḥīḥs from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ, as in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah of Ibn Kathīr). That a hole was made into the Wall of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj to the measure shown in the Ḥadīth could be taken in the real sense and also in a figurative one which would indicate the weakening of the Wall made by Dhul-Qarnain. (Ibn Kathīr, Abū Ḥayyān)

The Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah report from a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Ya'jūj Ma'jūj keep digging through the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Doing it everyday they reach the farthest part of this iron Wall so close as would make the light on the other side become visible to them. But, at that point, they say that they would dig all the way through it the next day, and return. However, Allah Ta'ālā makes it as strong as it was all over again. Then comes the next day and they start anew to dig through it. This cycle of their effort to dig and demolish and that of mending and fortify-

ing from Allah's side will continue until such time up to which Allah Ta'ālā intends to hold back Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. And when He intends to release them, they will dig, reach the farthest limit and say, 'If Allah wills, we shall go across it tomorrow.' (By making their effort dependent on the name and will of Allah, they will have the *taufīq* to succeed) So, when they return the next day as usual, they will find the remaining non-dug portion of the Wall as they had left it and this they will demolish and go across.

Tirmidhī has reported this narration on the authority of Abū 'Awānah, Qatādah, Abī Rafī', Abū Hurairah, in that order, and then he has said: 'غريب لانعرفه الا من هذا الوجه' (Unfamiliar. We do not know it except from this source). Ibn Kathīr has also reported this narration in his Tafsīr and then he has this to say:

اسناده جيّد قوى ولكن متنه فى رفعه نكارة

> Its chains of narrators are good and strong, but its text in the matter of its ascension (the effort to raise the channel of transmission up to attribute it the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not supported by stronger sources).

Ibn Kathīr comments on this Ḥadīth in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah: If it is held to be correct that this Ḥadīth is not *marfū'* (traceable in ascending order to the Holy Prophet ﷺ), instead, is a narration from Ka'b al-Aḥbār, then, it becomes clear that it is not worthy of trust. Now there is another possibility. The narration is regarded to be free from any error made by the narrator. It is given the status of the very saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, then, it would mean that this action of digging the Wall by Ya'jūj Ma'jūj will start at the time when the hour of their emergence draws close. And as for the statement of the Qur'ān, that is, no hole can be made in this Wall, it refers to the time when Dhul-Qarnain had made it. This leaves no contradiction here. Moreover, it could also be said that breaking a hole into the Wall means a hole which goes all the way through it - and this narration states it clearly that this hole does not go all the way through it. (Al-Bidāyah, p. 12, v. 2)

In Fatḥ al-Bārī, Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar has reported this Ḥadīth with reference to 'Abd ibn Ḥumaid and Ibn Ḥibbān as well and said that they all narrate from Qatādah and some of their narrators are the authorities of

the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. Then, he has not entertained any doubt about the Ḥadīth being rated as *marfū'* (ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ). Then he says with reference to Ibn al-'Arabi that this Ḥadīth contains three Divine signs, that is, miracles: (1) That Allah Ta'ālā did not let their minds think of the alternative of continuing their digging operation round the clock including the day and night both. If so, it would have not been at all difficult for a people with so many of them to work in shifts of day and night with specified assignment of duties. (2) That their minds were turned away from taking the option of scaling over the Wall by using artifices and devices. Although, from a narration of Wahb ibn Munabbih, it becomes clear that these people tilled the land which also yielded fruits and they used instruments of many kinds in this process. It should have not been difficult for them under these circumstances to assemble together the means of scaling the Wall. (3) That for such a long time it never occurred to them that they should have said, Insha'Allah: If Allah wills, and that this statement will issue forth through their speech only when the time of their emergence will come close.

Ibn al-'Arabi has said that this Ḥadīth also tells us that there are people among the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj who believe in the existence of Allah and in His Will. Then, it is also possible that Allah Ta'ālā may cause this statement to issue forth through their speech without having any belief and they find their job all done with its *barakah* (*ashrāṭ as-sā'ah* by as-Sayyid Muḥammad, p. 154). But, what is obvious here is that they too have received the call of the blessed prophets. Otherwise, according to the textual authority of the Qur'ān (*naṣṣ*), they should not be subjected to the punishment of Jahannam: وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتّٰى نَبْعَثَ رَسُوْلًا (And it is not Our way to punish [anyone] unless We send a messenger - al-Isrā', 17:15). This tells us that the invitation to believe has reached them too. But, they chose to stick by their denial. However, there will also be some people among them who would be subscribing to the view that Allah exists and that He has intention and will - though, having this much of a belief is not sufficient for *'Īmān* or faith, unless there is the essential faith in Prophet-hood and Hereafter. However, the saying of 'Insha'Allah': If Allah wills, despite Kufr (disbelief), is not a far out possibility.

Conclusions drawn from the narrations of Ḥadīth

That which stands proved about Ya'jūj Ma'jūj from the statements of

the Holy Prophet ﷺ as in the Aḥādīth cited above is given below:

(1) Ya'jūj Ma'jūj are the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام like the rest of human beings. The majority of Ḥadīth experts and historians identify them as the progeny of Yāfith, the son of Nūḥ عليه السلام. And it is also obvious that the progeny of Yāfith son of Nūḥ had spread itself out far and wide among different tribes, nationalities and many a populated areas between the period of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and that of Dhul-Qarnain. Thus, it is not necessary that the races known as Ya'jūj Ma'jūj were pinned down as a whole exclusively behind the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. There must have been some of their tribes and nationalities living on the other side of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. However, it can be said that the savage killers and destroyers among them were restrained through the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Historians refer to them generally as Turks, Mangkhol or Mongols. But, from among these, the name of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj applies only to the savage, uncivilized, blood-thirsty tyrants who remained untouched by civilization. The Turks, Mangkhols or Mongols who became civilized stand unsubstantiated by this name.

(2) The number of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj is several times higher than the number of the human beings of the whole world, at least at the ratio of one to ten. (Ḥadīth #2)

(3) The tribes and nationalities of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj stopped from crossing over to the other side of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain will remain so restrained right through the close of the zero Hour of the Last Day of Qiyāmah. The time destined for their emergence will be preceded by the appearance of Mahdī and Masīḥ عليهما السلام and that of Dajjāl (the anti-Christ). They will be released exactly after 'Īsā عليه السلام has descended and has killed Dajjāl. (Ḥadīth #1)

(4) At the time Ya'jūj Ma'jūj are to be released, the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain will crumble down all leveled to the ground (verse 18:98). The merciless hordes of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj would present an spectacle when, coming down from the mountain slopes all simultaneously, the speed of their descent would give the impression that they are sliding down to the ground en masse. These countless savage humans will hit the whole earth and its population. No one would be able to stand up against the killing and plunder by them. The apostle of Allah, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will, under Di-

vine command, take refuge on Mount Ṭūr along with his believing companions. People in other habitations of the world will seek asylum in available safe places. When supplies run out, necessities of life will become highly expensive. As for the rest of human population, these savages will finish them off and lick out their rivers. (Ḥadīth #1)

(5) Then, it will be through the prayer of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his companions that these countless locust like peoples will be destroyed simultaneously. The earth will be covered up with their dead bodies and the stench from which would make human rehabilitation on the earth difficult. (Ḥadīth #1)

(6) Then, it will be through the prayer of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his companions once again that their dead bodies would be disposed of into the sea or made to disappear altogether and the whole earth will be washed clean through a universal rain. (Ḥadīth #1)

(7) After that, there shall come a reign of peace lasting for nearly forty years. The earth will open the gates of its blessings. No one will remain poor and needy. No one will hurt or harass anyone. Peace and comfort shall prevail universally. (Ḥadīth #3)

(8) During this period of peace, the Hajj and 'Umrah of Baytullah will continue. (Ḥadīth #4) As for the death of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his burial in the Sacred Mausoleum, it already stands proved from the narrations of Ḥadīth. This too will transpire when he will travel to Ḥijāz for Hajj or 'Umrah. (As reported by Muslim from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه - explanatory note). After that, he will die in al-Madīnah al-Ṭaiyyibah and buried in the Sacred Mausoleum.

(9) During the later period of the life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he was shown a dream activated through a revelation (*waḥy*) that a hole had opened up in the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain, which he declared to be a sign of impending evil for Arabia. Some Ḥadīth experts (*al-muḥaddithīn*) have interpreted the opening of a hole in this Wall as real. Some others have taken it figuratively in the sense that this Wall of Dhul-Qarnain has become weak, the time of the emergence of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj has come close and its effects will show up in the form of Arab decline. Allah knows best.

(10) After his descent, he will stay on the earth for forty years. (Ḥadīth #3) Earlier than him, the period of Mahdī عليه السلام will also be that of forty years, part of which will feature the confluence and cooperation of both. In his book, Ashrāṭ al-Sā'ah (p.145), Sayyid Sharīf Barzanjī has said that the period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will follow the killing of Dajjāl and the peace prevailing thereafter and extend to forty years. This will make his total stay in the world for a period of forty-five years. And, it has been mentioned on page 112 that Mahdī عليه السلام will appear a thirty plus years before Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the total period credited to him will be that of forty years. Thus, the presence of the two blessed souls shall coincide for a number of five, or seven years, and both their periods will be marked by a reign of justice throughout the world. The earth will open up the gates of its blessings, neither will anyone remain poor, nor will anyone bear malice and hostility against anyone else. Of course, the great trial of the appearance of Dajjāl will hit the whole world during the later period of Mahdī عليه السلام - with the exception of Makkah, Madīnah, Baytul-Maqdis and the Mount of Ṭūr. This trial will be the greatest as compared to the rest of the trials the world has faced. Dajjāl and his disorder will last for forty days only. But, out of these forty days, the first day will be that of one year, the second day that of one week and the rest of days will be like they usually are. One way this can happen is that these days are really made to be that long - because, during those later times, nearly all events will be extraordinary and miraculous in nature. Then, it is also possible that the days and nights keep alternating as they usually do. But, it stands proved from Ḥadīth that Dajjāl would be a great magician. When so, it is also possible that, under the spell of his magic, common people remain unable to notice this revolutionary change in the alternation of days and nights and continue seeing this phenomena as nothing but one usual day. As for the injunction in Ḥadīth of performing Ṣalāh during that day on the estimated analogy of usual days, it also seems to support the assumption that the days and nights would be changing really, but people would not realize it cognitively. Therefore, in this day of one year, the order given was to perform Ṣalāh for three hundred sixty days. Otherwise, had the day been really one day only, the rules of the Sharī'ah would have required only five Ṣalāhs as obligatory for one day as such. In short, the total period of Dajjāl will have forty such days.

After that, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will descend, kill the Dajjāl and put an end to the disorder created by him. However, quite close to that the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj will emerge unleashing another spate of disorder, pillage and killing. But, the period of their presence will not go beyond a few days when they too will be destroyed all simultaneously as a result of the prayer of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. In short, there will be two ominous trials of Dajjāl and Ya'jūj Ma'jūj during the later period of Sayyidnā Mahdī عليه السلام and the early period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام which will shake the people of the entire earth upside down. Before and after these counted few days, however, the whole world will experience justice, peace and blessings. During the period of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, there will remain on the earth no creed and religion other than Islam. The earth will start sending forth its hidden treasures. No one will remain poor and needy. Even beasts and poisonous life forms will not hurt anyone.

An essential point of guidance:

As far as the information given above about the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain, these have been communicated to the Muslim Ummah by the Qur'ān, and the Aḥādīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Believing in it as such is necessary and opposition, impermissible. Now there remains the area of geographical and racial investigation as to questions like - Where is the wall of Dhul-Qarnain located? Who are these people called Ya'jūj Ma'jūj? Where do they live now? Here, it can be said that no Islamic 'Aqīdah (article of faith) depends on knowing this, nor does the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān hinge on it. But, the religious scholars of the Muslim Ummah, only in order to answer the absurdities dished out by antagonists and to provide additional insight, have discussed this subject in details. A part of it is being reported here.

Views of Muslim scholars

In his Tafsīr, al-Qurṭubī has reported from as-Suddiyy that twenty-one of the twenty-two tribes of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj were shut off by the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. One of their tribes was left out on the inner side of the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. They are Turks. After that, al-Qurṭubī says that the sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the Turks resemble the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and that the incidence of a war between them and Muslims during the later times appears in a ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim. At present, he continues: A large number of Turk people are arrayed against

Muslims. Only Allah knows their exact number and only He can save Muslims from their evil. It appears as if they are the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj - or, at least, are their forerunners. (Al-Qurṭubī, p. 58, v.11) (Al-Qurṭubī belongs to the sixth century of Hijrah when the Tātār onslaught came and destroyed the Islamic Caliphate. This great upheaval is well known in Islamic history and the Tātārs are reputed to be from the Mogol or Mongkhol Turks). But, as for al-Qurṭubī, he has simply said that they resembled the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and could be their forerunners. He has not identified the havoc caused by the Tātārs as the emergence of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj which is one of the signs of the coming of the last day of Qiyāmah. The reason is that the Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim mentioned above makes it clear that this emergence will come to pass after the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام during his period.

Therefore, 'Allamah 'Ālūsī has, in his Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, strongly refuted the position of those who have taken the Tatars as the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. According to him, the very thought is a flagrant error and certainly an opposition to the textual authority of Ḥadīth. However, this much he too said that this havoc, no doubt, did resemble the havoc to be caused by the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. (Rūḥ, p. 44, v. 16) It proves that the view of some contemporary historians who take modern Russia or China or both as the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj would have not been really wrong. However, the condition is that they should have meant by it the same thing said by al-Qurṭubī and al-'Ālūsī, that is, the upheaval caused by them resembled that of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. But, declaring it to be the very emergence of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj - something reported in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth as signs of Qiyāmah and which was due to come after the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام - is absolutely wrong. The approach is erroneous and it betrays a rejection of the textual authority (*nuṣūṣ*) of Ḥadīth.

Famous historian, Ibn Khaldun has taken up this subject in the prolegomena of his history. As part of his description of the sixth kingdom, he has alluded to the geographical location of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain as follows:

> "Inhabiting towards the west, in the ninth part of the seventh kingdom, there are tribes of Turks called قنجاق (*qinjāq*) [Qipcaq or Qypchaq as in Bertold Spuler] and جركس (Cherkess) [Circassians, the Caucasian people, as in Spuler]. The eastern side is

> populated by the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. In between the two, Mount Caucasus draws the line of demarcation. It has been mentioned earlier that it begins from *al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ* located in the east of the fourth kingdom and goes up to the northern end of the kingdom. Then, receding away from *al-baḥr al-muḥīṭ,* it continues in a north-western direction and enters the ninth part of the fifth kingdom. From here, it reverts to its first direction until it enters the ninth part of the seventh kingdom. Once it reaches there, it goes from the south in a north-western direction. Located in between this mountain range is the 'Wall of Alexander.' It is situated in the middle of the ninth part of the seventh kingdom as we have identified earlier and the Qur'ān too informs us about it.

In his book of geography, 'Abdullāh ibn Khurdāzbih has reported the dream of the 'Abbāsī Khalīfah, Wāthiq Billah in which he had seen that the Wall had opened up. As a result, he woke up all upset and sent his emissary, Sallam on a fact-finding mission. On his return, he reported the condition and distinct features of this very Wall." (Muqaddimah ibn Khaldun, p. 79)

That Wāthiq Billah, the Abbāsi Khalifah sent an observer group to investigate the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain and that it did return after having made the investigation has been mentioned by Ibn Kathīr too in al-Bidāyah wa an-Nihāyah. Also said there is that this Wall has been made in iron with huge locked gates and is located towards the north-east. After narrating the event, Tafsīr Kabir and al-Ṭabarī add: One who comes back after having seen the Wall reaches the barren fields facing Samarkand in the company of guides. (Tafsīr Kabīr, v. 5, p. 513)

The great scholar of Islam and my revered teacher, Maulanā Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī has mentioned Ya'jūj Ma'jūj and the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain in his book, عقيدة الإسلام فى حياة عيسى عليه السلام. Though it is an adjunct of his book yet, whatever he has mentioned there measures up to the highest level of investigation and Tradition. He said: To remain protected against the plunder and devastation by mischievous and savage human beings walls have been built on the earth, not simply at one place but at several places. Different kings have built these at various places during different ages. Most famous and the largest among these is the Great Wall of China. Its length given by Abū Ḥayyān al-Andulūsī (the royal historian of the Iranian Court) is twelve hundred miles. It was founded

by Faghfur, the Emperor of China, and that the date of its inception goes back to three thousand four hundred and sixty years after the advent of Sayyidnā Ādam ﷺ, and also that the Moghul people (Mongol or Mongkhol) call this Great Wall, *'atkuwah'*, and the Turks, *'burqūrqah.* Then he has acknowledged that several walls of this nature are found at other places as well.

Our leading fellow-servant of the Faith, Maulanā Ḥifẓur-Raḥmān Sihwārwī, may he rest in peace, has given a well-documented historical detail elaborating the statement of Shaykh Kashmīrī in his well-known book, Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'ān. A gist is given below:

The range of the evil savagery of Ya'jūj Ma'jūj was so extensive that, on the one hand, the people of southern Caucasia suffered from their tyrannical onslaughts while, on the other hand, the inhabitants of Tibet and China also served as sitting targets of their savagery. It was to stay safe from these very Ya'jūj Ma'jūj that protective walls were built at various place during different ages. The largest among these is the Great Wall of China mentioned earlier.

The second Wall is located near Bukhārā and Tirmidh in Central Asia. It is situated at a place called Darband (meaning 'blocked passage'). This Wall was there during the time of the famous Moghul king, Taimūr Lang (Timur, the Lame; Tamerlane). The German confidant of the Roman King, Cella Berger, has mentioned him in his book. Kilafchu, the emissary of Castille, the King of Andulusia has also referred to him in his travelogue. When he presented himself as the emissary of his King before Taimūr, he had passed by this spot. He writes that the Wall of Bāb al-Ḥadīd (Iron Gate) is situated on the route coming from Mousel and which lies in between Samarkand and India. (From Tafsīr Jawāhir al-Qur'ān by al-Ṭanṭāwī, v. 9. p. 198)

The third Wall is located in Dāghistān in Russia. This too is famous by the name of Darband (blocked passage) and Bāb al-Abwāb (The Gate of gates). Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī in Mu'jim al-Buldān, al-Idrīsī in al-Jughrāfiah and Bustānī in Dāiratul-Ma'ārif have described these in great details, a gist of which is as follows:

"In Dāghistān, 'Darband' is a Russian city. It is situated on the western shore of Baḥr Khaḍir (Caspian Sea), latitude 43.3 North and longi-

tude 48.15 east. It is also called 'Darband Nausherwān'. Another name for it, 'Bāb al-Abwāb,' is also famous."

The fourth Wall is located in the higher parts of Caucasia towards the west of this very 'Bāb al-Abwāb where, in between two mountains, there is a pass well known as the Dāryāl Pass. This fourth Wall is right here and is known as the Wall of Qafqāz or Mount Qoqā or Koh Qāf (Caucasus). About it, Bustānī writes:

"And close to it (the Wall of Bāb al-Abwāb), there is another Wall which goes on extending towards the West. In all likelihood, this may have been built by the people of Fāris (Persia) as a measure of defense against the northern Berbers. Since the identity of its founder was not authentically known, some people have attributed it to Alexander while some others have ascribed it to Cyrus and Nausherwan. And Yāqūt says that it has been constructed with molten copper." (Dā'iratul-Ma'ārif, v. 7, p. 651; Mu'jimul-Buldān, v. 8, p. 9)

Since all these Walls are in the North and have been built for a single need, therefore, difficulties have come up in determining as to which of these is the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. And the major confusion has showed up in the case of the last two Walls because the name of both the places is Darband and there is a Wall also present at both. Out of the four Walls mentioned above, the Great Wall of China is the longest and the oldest. About it, no one says that it is the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Then, instead of being in the North, it is in the Far East - and that it is in the North is clear as indicated by the Qur'ān al-Karīm.

Now, the thing revolves between the remaining three Walls which happen to be but in the North. Out of these, speaking generally, historians - Mas'ūdī, Iṣṭakhrī, Ḥamawī and others - identify the Wall located in Dāghistān, or at Darband in the Caucasian territory of Bāb al-Abwāb by the Caspian Sea as the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain. Historians who have called the Wall and Darband of Bukhārā and Tirmidh as being the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain have, most likely, been confused because of the common factor of the word, Darband. At this point, its location stands nearly fixed. Now, it can be said that it is situated in Bāb al-Abwāb by the Darband of Caucasia in the territory of Dāghistān, or is located even at a higher altitude of the Mountain of Qafqāz or Qāf (Caucasus). As for a

Wall being there on both these places is a fact proved by historians.

By way of further refinement in between the two probabilities given above, my revered teacher, Maulanā Sayyid Muḥammad Anwar Shāh has, in 'Aqīdatul-Islam,' given preference to the Wall of Koh Qāf (Qafqāz: Caucasus) as being the Wall built by Dhul-Qarnain. ('Aqīdatul-Islam, p. 297)

The Wall of Dhul-Qarnain: Is it still there? Will it be there until Qiyāmah? Or, has it disintegrated?

Historians and geographers of Europe do not recognize the presence of any of these northern Walls in our time, nor do they admit that the passage of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj is still blocked. On that basis, some Muslim historians have also started saying and writing that the event of the emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj mentioned in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth has already taken place. Some of them have declared the great onslaught of Tātārs in the sixth century Hijrah as being the emergence of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj mentioned by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. Still others have found it sufficient to equate the contemporary rise of the Russian, Chinese and European peoples with the emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj and have thereby closed the case conveniently. But, all this is - as stated earlier with reference to Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī - totally wrong. To say that the particular emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj mentioned by the Qur'ān was a sign of Qiyāmah translates as a denial of Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth. The Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth of Muslim narrated by al-Nawwās ibn Sam'ān ﷺ, and others says that Qiyāmah will come after three events have taken place. These events will be the emergence of Dajjāl (anti-Christ), the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the killing of Dajjāl. How can it be said that it has already come to pass! The reason is obvious. The Dajjāl has not emerged. Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام has yet to descend. And there is no doubt about it.

Nevertheless, it is not counter to any textual authority (*naṣṣ*) of Qur'ān, and Sunnah that the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain may have disintegrated now and some people from among the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj may have come on this side. However, this will remain subject to the condition that one admits that their last and the most massive onslaught, which will prove to be the destroyer of the entire human population, has not come yet. In fact, it will come after the great manifestation of the signs of Qiyāmah mentioned earlier, that is, the appearance of the Dajjāl and

the descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام etc.

The considered view of 'Allāmah Kashmīrī رحمه الله تعالى in this matter is that the European assertion that they have scanned the whole world and have found no trace of this Wall bears no weight. First of all, the reason is that they themselves have clearly admitted that, despite having reached the zenith of travel and research, there remain many forests, rivers and islands about which they had been unable to collect information. Then, not too remote is the probability that the Wall, despite being present, may now have taken the form of a mountain because of mountains crumbling and joining together. But, no absolute textual authority (*naṣṣ*) contradicts the fact of this Wall disintegrating before Qiyāmah, or of some people from the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj crossing over to this side by taking some distant and long-winding route.

The strongest argument put forward in favor of this Wall of Dhul-Qarnain surviving until the last day of Qiyāmah is based on the statement of the Qur'ān: فَإِذَا جَآءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّى جَعَلَهُ دَكَّآءَ (98). Here, Dhul-Qarnain says, 'when the promise of my Lord will materialize (that is, the time will come for the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj to appear), Allah Ta'ālā will make this Wall crumble down to ground level.' The proponents of this argument have interpreted the words: وَعْدُ رَبِّى (the promise of my Lord) in this verse in the sense of Qiyāmah, the Last Day - although, the words of the Qur'ān are not definite and categorical about it. The reason is that the Qur'ānic words: وَعْدُ رَبِّى (the promise of my Lord) carry a very clear sense of their own. So, what is meant here is that the arrangement made by Dhul-Qarnain to block the entry of the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj may not necessarily remain there, as is, forever. When Allah Ta'ālā wills to have the passage open to them, this Wall will lie demolished. Therefore, it is not necessary that it would happen precisely close to the Qiyāmah. Accordingly, all commentators have mentioned both probabilities in the sense of: وَعْدُ رَبِّى (the promise of my Lord). It appears in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ:

والوعد يحتمل ان يراد به يوم القيمة، وان يراد به وقت خروج ياجوج و ماجوج

> And the promise has the probability that meant by it is the Day of Qiyāmah and that meant by it is the time of the emergence of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj.

One way of verifying this could be the eventuality that the Wall lies

demolished, the passage has opened up and the onslaught of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj has begun. It does not matter whether its beginning is taken to be from the havoc caused by the Tātār in the sixth century Hijrah, or from the present ascendancy of the peoples of Europe, Russia and China. But, it is evident that the aggressive emergence of these civilized peoples - something taking place in a constitutional and legal framework - cannot be classed as rank disorder which is being particularly pointed out by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. The anatomy of havoc given there is that it will unfold in the form of such a magnitude of merciless bloodshed and devastation that it will eliminate the entire human population. Rather, the outcome will, then, be that some nationalities of these very Ya'jūj Ma'jūj had turned civilized after having moved to this side. They certainly turned out to be the source of great disorder and trial for Islamic countries. But, till now, their savage counterparts who know nothing but bloodshed have not come to this side as destined - and the majority of them are of that kind. These will emerge very close to Qiyāmah.

The source of the second argument is the Ḥadīth of Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad where it is said that the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj keep digging this Wall everyday. But, first of all, Ibn Kathīr has declared this Ḥadīth to be *ma'lūl* (defective despite its apparently correct chain of narrators). Secondly, in the Ḥadīth itself, there is no clarification that the day Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will cross over the Wall by virtue of saying Insha'Allah the thing will happen necessarily close to the Qiyāmah. Then, the Ḥadīth does not provide any proof either that the whole lot of the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj will remain restrained behind the Wall. Even if some groups, or nationalities, from among them were to come to this side by taking some distant and long-winding route, it will still not be too far out an eventuality in the presence of powerful modern ships. In fact, some historians have mentioned that the Ya'jūj Ma'jūj have found the way to reach this side via long sea travel. If so, the Ḥadīth does not contradict that either.

In short, there is no clear and definite proof in the Qur'ān and Sunnah that goes on to establish that the Wall of Dhul-Qarnain will remain standing right through the last day of Qiyāmah. Or, their elementary and insignificant attacks against the human population on this side will not be possible. However, in all certainty, the time of that horrific and

devastating onslaught which will destroy the entire human population will be but close to the Qiyāmah as has been mentioned repeatedly. To sum up, it can be said that based on the textual authority (*nuṣūṣ*) of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, it is not possible to give an absolute verdict that the Wall against the Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj has disintegrated leaving the passage open. Nor can it be said that, according to the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, it is necessary that it survives up to the Qiyāmah. Both probabilities exist. And Pure and High is Allah who knows reality best.

Verses 99 - 101

وَتَرَكْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّمُوْجُ فِيْ بَعْضٍ وَّنُفِخَ فِي الصُّوْرِ فَجَمَعْنٰهُمْ جَمْعًا ﴿۹۹﴾ وَّعَرَضْنَا جَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَرْضًا ﴿۱۰۰﴾ الَّذِيْنَ كَانَتْ اَعْيُنُهُمْ فِيْ غِطَآءٍ عَنْ ذِكْرِيْ وَكَانُوْا لَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ سَمْعًا ﴿۱۰۱﴾

And on that day, We will leave them (Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj) surging over one another. And the Horn shall be blown then We shall gather them together. [99] **And on that day We will bring Jahannam fully exposed before the infidels** [100] **whose eyes were under a cover against My reminders, and they were not able to listen.** [101]

Commentary

As for the pronoun of the word: بَعْضَهُمْ (*ba'ḍahum*) in بَعْضَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّمُوْجُ فِيْ بَعْضٍ (And on that day, We will leave them [Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj] surging over one another - 99), it is obvious that it reverts back to Ya'jūj Ma'jūj. Then, as for their condition described therein - 'surging over one another' - it is also obvious that this will be their state when the passage lies open for them and they will be hastening their way from the hilly heights down to the ground. Commentators have suggested other probabilities as well.

The pronoun in: فَجَمَعْنٰهُمْ (*fajama'nāhum:* Then We shall gather them together - 99) is reverting back to the creation at large, human beings and the Jinn. The sense is that the entire creation of human beings and the Jinn who have been obligated with the percepts of the Sharī'ah (*mu-*

kallaf) shall be gathered together on the plains of Resurrection (al-Hashr).

Verses 102 - 108

أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓا أَنْ يَّتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِى مِنْ دُونِىٓ أَوْلِيَآءَ ۚ إِنَّآ
أَعْتَدْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكٰفِرِينَ نُزُلًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ
أَعْمَالًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ اَلَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ
أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا ﴿١٠٤﴾ أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَآئِهٖ
فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَزْنًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ ذٰلِكَ
جَزَآؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَاتَّخَذُوٓا اٰيٰتِى وَرُسُلِى هُزُوًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ إِنَّ
الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا
﴿١٠٧﴾ خٰلِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

Do, then, the disbelievers deem (it fit) that they take My servants as patrons beside Me? Surely, We have prepared Jahannam as entertainment for the disbelievers. [102]

Say, "Shall We tell you about the greatest losers in respect of (their) deeds? [103] **Those are the ones whose effort in the worldly life has gone in vain while they think they are doing well.** [104] **Those are the ones who disbelieved in the signs of their Lord and in the meeting with Him, so their deeds have gone waste and We shall not assign to them any weight.** [105] **That is their punishment, the Jahannam, for they disbelieved and made My signs and My messengers a mockery.** [106]

Surely those who believed and did righteous deeds theirs are the Gardens of Firdaus as entertainment [107] **where they will live forever and will not wish to move from there."** [108]

Commentary

According to Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, in the first verse (102): أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓا أَنْ يَّتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِى مِنْ دُونِىٓ أَوْلِيَآءَ (Do, then, the disbelievers deem [it fit]

that they take My servants as patrons beside Me?), there is an elision (حذف: *ḥadhf*) in the text at this place, that is: فيجد بهم نفعًا وينتفعون بذلك الاتخاذ . As such, it would mean: 'Do these disbelieving people who have taken My servants - instead of Me - as the objects of their worship and the dispensers of their matters and problems think that this make-shift arrangement made by them would bring them some benefit and they would enjoy it?' This is a form of interrogative meant for negation or disapproval. In short, it means that such thinking is wrong, a mark of ignorance.

The word: عِبَادِى (*'ibādī*: My servants) used here means angels, and the particular prophets whom the people of the world worshiped taking them as partners in the pristine divinity of Allah - as Sayyidnā 'Uzair and Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليهما السلام. Those who worshiped angels were some Arabs. As for those who ascribed partners to Allah, the Jews and Christians both did it. The Jews did it in respect of Sayyidnā 'Uzair عليه السلام and the Christians, in respect of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام. Therefore, meant here by: اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا (*al-ladhīna kafarū*: Those who disbelieved) in this verse are these very groups of disbelievers. Some commentators have taken عِبَادِى (*'ibādī*: My servants) at this place to mean satans. In that case, اَلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا (those who disbelieved) would mean disbelievers who worship the Jinn and satans. Some other commentators have taken عِبَادِى (*'ibādī*: My servants) at this place in the general sense of something created, under mastery, which becomes inclusive of all false objects of worship, idols, fire and stars. Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī رحمه الله تعالى has referred to this aspect in the Summary of his Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān while explaining servants as subjects. However, the first explanation given above has been rated as weightier in al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and other Tafsīrs. Allah knows best.

The word: أَوْلِيَاءَ (*awliyā'*) is the plural of وَلِى (*waliyy*). This word is used in the Arabic language to carry several meanings. At this place, it means one who gets things done, resolves matters, fulfills needs - which is the particular attribute of the true object of worship. The purpose thereby is to take them as objects of worship.

Who are those referred to as: اَلْاَخْسَرِيْنَ اَعْمَالاً (The greatest losers in respect of [their] deeds - 103)? At this place, the first two verses (101, 102) are, in terms of their general sense, inclusive of every individual or

group that would put in a lot of effort in some deeds taking them to be good, but with Allah their effort is ruined and their deed, wasted. Al-Qurṭubī said that this situation is caused due to two things. One: Corruption in Belief. Two: Hypocrisy. It means that a person whose very Belief and Faith is not correct - no matter how good he is in his deeds and how painstaking in his effort - will find all this useless and wasted in the Hereafter.

Similarly, the deed of anyone who acts for the pleasure of the created by way of hypocrisy, that deed too will remain deprived of *thawāb* (reward). It is in terms of this general sense that some revered Ṣaḥābah have declared the Khārjites as the substantiation of this verse. Then, there are some commentators who take the Mu'tazilah, the Rawāfiḍ and some others as the groups who have strayed away from the straight path. But, in the next verse (105), it has been determined that meant at this place are those particular disbelievers who deny the verses of Allah Ta'ālā and the coming of Qiyāmah and Ākhirah. It was said: أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ (Those are the ones who disbelieved in the signs of their Lord and in the meeting with Him). Therefore, al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, Maẓharī and others prefer the view that really meant at this place are particular disbelievers who deny Allah, the Last Day and the Reckoning of deeds. But, apparently too, even those people whose deeds were ruined by their corrupted beliefs and whose effort had gone waste cannot remain unaffected by its general sense. As for the related sayings reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī and Sa'd ﷺ, this is precisely what they mean. (Qurṭubī)

The last sentence in the same verse (105): فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا (and We shall not assign to them any weight) means that their deeds may appear to be great outwardly, but when placed on the balance of reckoning, they will carry no weight. The reason is that these deeds will be of no use and will not carry any weight because of *kufr* (disbelief) and *shirk* (ascribing of partners to Allah).

According to a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, there will come a tall and heavy man who, in the sight of Allah, will not be worth the weight of a mosquito.' Then he said: 'If you wish to verify it, recite this verse of the Qur'ān: فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا

(and We shall not assign to them any weight).'

Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī ﵁ says: '(on the day of Qiyāmah) deeds as big as the mountains of Tihāmah will be brought in. But, they will carry no weight on the balance of justice.' (Qurṭubī)

The word: الْفِرْدَوْسِ (al-Firdaus) in: جَنّٰتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ (Gardens of Firdaus) means a verdant valley full of fruits and flowers - with reference to Paradise. However, difference exists as to the origin of this word. Is it Arabic, or is it non-'Arabic? Those who call it non-Arabic have to refine it further. Is it Persian or Greco-Roman or Syriac? There are different views about this.

It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'when you ask of Allah, ask for Jannatul-Firdaus because it is the highest and the superior most rank of Jannah. Above it, there is the Throne of the Rahmān and from it issue forth all streams of Jannah.' (Qurṭubī)

The purpose of the last sentence: لَا يَبْغُوْنَ عَنْهَا حِوَلًا (and will not wish to move from there - 108) is to tell that this station of Jannah is a never-ending, ever-lasting blessing for them. The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā has promulgated His command to the effect that whoever has entered Jannah will never be expelled from there. But, there was the possibility of some doubt crossing someone's heart, for human beings naturally get fed up by living at one place. They wish to move out and go to other places. Now, if they were not allowed to go elsewhere out of Jannah, they might start feeling the pinch of a sort of restriction. This was answered in the verse by saying that taking Jannah on the analogy of other places is rank ignorance. Once a person goes into the Jannah, everything he saw and lived with in the mortal world would find all that trifling in the presence of the bliss and beauty of Jannah and - so blessed in that manner - no one would ever even think of going out of here.

Verses 109 - 110

قُلْ لَّوْكَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِّكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّىْ لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ اَنْ تَنْفَدَ
كَلِمٰتُ رَبِّىْ وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهٖ مَدَدًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ

يُوحَىٰٓ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَآ إِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَٰحِدٌ ۖ فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا۟ لِقَآءَ رَبِّهِۦ فَلْيَعْمَلْ
عَمَلًا صَٰلِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِۦٓ أَحَدًۢا ﴿١١٠﴾

Say, "If the ocean were to be ink for the Words of my Lord, the ocean would have been consumed before the Words of my Lord are exhausted, even though we were to bring another one, like it, in addition." [109]

Say, "Surely, I am but a human being like you; it is revealed to me that your God is the One God. So the one who hopes to meet his Lord must do righteous deed and must not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord." [110]

Commentary

The cause of the revelation of the last verse of Sūrah al-Kahf: وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِۦٓ أَحَدًا (and must not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord - 110), as mentioned in Ḥadīth reports, shows that *shirk* at this place means hidden *shirk,* that is, hypocrisy (رِيَاء : *riyā'*).

One such narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ﷺ has been reported by Imām Ḥākim in al-Mustadrak as being sound on the criterion set forth by the two authorities, al-Bukhārī and Muslim. According to the narration, one of the Muslims used to carry out Jihād in the way of Allah. Side by side, he wished that his soldiering and bravery in the cause be recognized and appreciated by the people. This verse was revealed about him (which tells us that one gets no *thawāb* (reward) by having such an intention in Jihād).

In Kitābul-Ikhlāṣ, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Abī al-Dunyā have reported from Ṭāwūs that a Ṣaḥābī stated before the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'There are occasions when I am ready to worship, or to do some righteous deed, my aim thereby is nothing but the pleasure of Allah. But, along with it, I do have the wish that people would see me doing it.' Hearing this, he observed silence until the cited verse was revealed.

And in Abū Nu'aym and in the history of Ibn 'Asākir, it appears on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that whenever the Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā Jundub ibn Zuhayr ﷺ prayed, fasted or gave in charity and then saw people admiring him for doing those deeds, he felt pleased

about it and would then increase the frequency of those deeds. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

The gist of narrations given above is that the *shirk* prohibited in this verse is the hidden *shirk* of showing off (*riyā'*). And that a deed may though be for Allah alone but, along with it, should it become associated with some selfish motive of name, fame and recognition, then, this too will be a kind of hidden *shirk*, something that makes one's deed go waste, even harmful.

However, there are some other Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth which apparently seem to indicate otherwise. For example, Tirmidhī reports from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that he submitted before the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'There are times when I am on my prayer mat inside my house (making Ṣalāh) and, all of a sudden, there comes someone. I like it that he saw me in that state. (Would that be *riyā'*?)' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'O Abū Hurairah, may Allah have mercy on you. Then you get two rewards, one for the deed you were already doing in secret, and the other for what you did openly after the coming of that person. (This is no *riyā'*).'

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī ﷺ appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked, 'What do you say about a person who does some good deed, then hears people praising it?' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, تِلْكَ عَاجِلُ بُشْرَى الْمُؤْمِنِ : "This is instant good news for the believer." (that his deed was accepted with Allah and He had his servants praise it).

The apparent difference in these two kinds of narrations has been resolved and brought in agreement in Tafsīr Maẓharī. It says that the first kind of narrations about the cause of the revelation of the verse apply to a particular situation. This is when one associates his intention to please people or to earn a good name for himself along with the intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah through his deed to the extent that he further increases the frequency of that deed on being praised by people for it. This is, no doubt, hypocrisy (*riyā'*) and hidden *shirk*.

And the latter narrations, those from Tirmidhī and Muslim, concern another situation. This is when one has acted for the pleasure of Allah alone without any inclination of receiving publicity or praise for it and

then Allah Ta'ālā, in His grace, gives him fame by making people praise him. If so, it has nothing to do with *riyā'* (showing off). In fact, this is spontaneous good news for the believer (that his deed has found acceptance with Allah).

Riyā' and its Evil Consequences: Stern Warnings of Ḥadīth

Sayyidnā Maḥmūd ibn Labīd ﷺ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'What I fear most about you is minor *shirk.'* The Ṣaḥābah asked: 'Yā Rasūlallah, what is minor *shirk*?' He said, 'Riyā'' (to do something only to show people). (Reported by Aḥmad in his Musnad)

After having reported this Ḥadīth in Shu'ab-al-'Īmān, Al-Baihaqī has also reported the remarks: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, when Allah Ta'ālā will reward His servants for their deeds, He will ask the practitioners of *riyā'* to go for their rewards to those they wanted to impress with their deeds and find out whether or not they have any for them.'

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah Ta'ālā says 'I am free and above from associating with those associated with Me. Whoever does a good deed and then associates in it someone else with Me, then, I leave the entire deed for the one associated.' And, according to another narration, 'I withdraw from that deed making it exclusive for the person associated with me.' (Narrated by Muslim)

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﷺ reports that he heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying, 'Whoever does a good deed to earn a fair name among people, then, Allah Ta'ālā too deals with him in a manner that he is disgraced before them.' (Narrated by Aḥmad in Shu'ab-al-'Īmān - from Tafsīr Maẓharī)

It appears in Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī that Sayyidnā Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was asked about *ikhlāṣ* (unalloyed sincerity) and *riyā'* (showing off). He said: Ikhlāṣ requires that your good deeds remaining hidden should be what you like and the bad deeds remaining hidden should be what you do not like. After that, if Allah Ta'ālā discloses your deeds before the people, you should say, 'Yā Allah, all this is Your grace and favor, not the outcome of my deed and effort.'

And Tirmidhī reports from Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ﷺ that the Holy

Prophet ﷺ once mentioned *shirk* by saying: هُوَفِيْكُمْ اَخفٰى مِنْ دَبِيْبِ النَّمْلِ (It is right there in you more stealthily than the soundless movement of an ant). Then, he added, 'I tell you something which, if you do, you will remain safe against all sorts of *shirk,* major or minor (*riyā'*). Make this prayer (*du'ā'*) three times every day:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّىْ اَعُوْذُبِكَ اَنْ اُشْرِكَ بِكَ وَاَنَا اَعْلَمُ وَاَسْتَغْفِرُكَ لِمَا لاَاَعْلَمُ

O' Allah, I seek refuge with You lest I associate a partner with You while I know and I seek forgiveness from You for what I do not know.

Some Merits and Properties of Sūrah al-Kahf

Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' ؓ reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever remembers to recite the first ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will remain safe against the *fitnah* (upheaval, trial) caused by Dajjāl (anti-Christ). (Reported by Muslim, Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'ī)

And Imām Aḥmad, Muslim and al-Nasā'ī have reported within this narration from Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' words to the effect that 'whoever remembers to recite the last ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will remain safe against the *fitnah* of Dajjāl.'

And according to a narration of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever recites the initial and the concluding verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will have light for him, from his feet up to his head. And whoever recites this Sūrah in full will have light for him, from the ground up to the sky." (Reported by Ibn al-Sunni, and Aḥmad in his Musnad)

And as narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever recites Sūrah al-Kahf in full on the day of Jumu'ah will have light for him until the next Jumu'ah. (Reported and declared as Ṣaḥīḥ by al-Ḥākim and al-Baihaqī in al-Da'awāt - from Maẓharī)

To Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ someone said, 'I resolve in my heart to wake up in the later part of night and make Ṣalāh but sleep overtakes me.' Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās said to him, 'recite the last verses of Sūrah al-Kahf - from: قُلْ لَّوْكَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا (109) to the end of the Sūrah (110) - before you sleep. Then, the time you intend to wake up will be the time when Allah Ta'ālā will wake you up.' (Reported by ath-Tha'alibī)

And according to the Musnad of al-Dārimī, Zirr ibn Ḥubaish told 'Abdah, 'Anyone who sleeps after having recited these last verses will wake up at the time he or she intends to.' And 'Abdah says, 'we have tried this repeatedly. It happens just like that.'

An important word of advice

Ibn al-'Arabī quotes his Shaikh, Ṭurtūshī: 'Let not the hours of your dear life pass away confronting contemporaries and socializing with friends. Watch out! Allah Ta'ālā has concluded His statement on the following verse:

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَآءَ رَبِّهٖ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلاً صَالِحًا وَّ لاَ يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهٖٓ اَحَدًا

So the one who hopes to meet his Lord must do righteous deed and must not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord - 110 (Al-Qurṭubī)

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah al-Kahf
And Volume V
End here.

A

B

C

I

L

M

Q

R

S

T

U

V W

X Y

Z